

The Changing Role of NARICs – a Research Project

Final Report

- Public Part -

Project information

Project title:	The Changing Role of NARICs
Agreement number:	2011-4320 / 010-001
Project website:	http://charonaproject.wordpress.com/
Reporting period:	From 01/02/2012 To 31/01/2014
Date of submission:	28 / 03 / 2014
Beneficiary organisation:	ECCTIS Limited (UK NARIC)
Project coordinator:	Katherine Latta
Project coordinator email address:	Katherine.latta@naric.org.uk

This project has been funded with support from the European Community under the Invitation addressed to the Network of National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC) for co-funding proposals for the year 2012 -2013 and 2013-2014.

This publication [communication] reflects the views only of the author, and the Executive Agency/European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Project Summary

Project Objectives (envisaged objectives, target groups, needs addressed)

The last fifteen years have seen extensive reforms and development in the European sphere of education. The Bologna and Copenhagen Processes and the introduction of recognition tools and practices beyond the Lisbon Recognition Convention; including the referencing of national qualification frameworks to the EQF; the on-going discussion about the European Directive 2005/36/EC; and other initiatives. Each of these impacting considerably on the context in which NARICs operate at a national and international level. The work of the NARICs, and their contributions to the developments in Europe, has evolved throughout, but this calls into question how the role of NARICs has changed and how the work of NARICs may continue to adapt in the future.

Therefore, the key objectives of the project have been to:

- investigate how the role of NARICs has changed through in-depth research and consultation with the centres
- identify drivers of these changes in the form of internal or external developments and policies
- contribute to policy development of recognition by reviewing the role of NARICs in the context of European initiatives and instruments relating to recognition and mobility
- enhance the quality and effectiveness of the NARIC network by providing an opportunity to review current practices
- promote cooperation of all network members and contribute towards greater interactivity with other networks.

The key target group for the study is the NARIC Network and Centres, but the impact will be far reaching. The NARIC network would benefit from greater clarity and consistency in the way in which their role is understood both within and outside of the network. The outcomes will, by extension, benefit recognition stakeholders in both the European Community and beyond, and feed into the Europe 2020 Strategy.

Project Outcomes and Undertaken Activities (including information on the involvement of partners, if applicable and the dissemination and exploitation strategy)

The key project outcome is a comprehensive report providing in-depth analysis on the different EU initiatives and their impact on the role of NARIC centres. This was an internal evaluation, taking into consideration the views of NARICs themselves, and therefore not explicitly seeking opinions external to the centres and the network. The key finding was that NARIC centres are complex multi-faceted organisations with varying roles and influence dependent on their national context. The findings have led to recommendations on future actions and areas to focus on for the centres individually and the networks as a whole.

The team consisted of UK NARIC (project coordinator) and the NARICs of Poland, the Netherlands, Norway, Denmark and Ireland. All partners contributed to all phases of work, either through conducting research and analysis directly or by providing input and feedback on the activities of the other partners. All partners contributed to the drafting of the recommendations contained in the final report.

The project activities were split into three categories:

- Data-collection and stock-taking
- Analysis
- Consultation and dissemination

Data collection and stock-taking:

The project team undertook extensive data-collection, research and stock-taking activities, having conducted desktop research (considering relevant national and international policies, legislation and regulations for instance), developing national profiles based on the first-hand experience of the NARICs involved in the project, conducting three network-wide surveys to research the roles of NARICs and the impact of the changing context in which they work, as well as using interviews with selected NARICs to develop case studies highlighting the key findings of the research.

Analysis:

The extensive research which was conducted as part of this project fed into several phases of analysis to identify the most pertinent changes and the policies which may influence them. Following the initial research and stock-taking, six main themes were identified as requiring further in-depth investigation. These themes were:

- 1) The changing and widening scope of work covered by the ENIC-NARIC recognition services (additional education sectors and types of qualifications)
- 2) Changing and widening remit of the ENIC-NARIC Network, and additional functions taken on by the Centres
- 3) The Bologna Process and its implications for the Network

- 4) The development of the EQF and other Transnational Qualification Frameworks and their potential impact
- 5) Directive 2005/36/EC and its implications for the Network
- 6) The role of the Network with respect to national immigration policies

Consultation and dissemination:

Consultation and dissemination were key considerations of this project; the project team sought to ensure close co-operation with other relevant projects through shared team members; consultation with the ENIC-NARIC networks through surveys canvassing the opinions of the centres as well as dissemination of information at the joint annual meetings across the two years of the project. These consultations were invaluable in developing the findings of the study.

The final report consists of extensive research into the changing role of NARICs and the impact of various policy initiatives on the scope and remit of work. The recommendations which stem from this research are numerous and demonstrate the enormous potential of the centres and the Networks to be even more integral to developments in the field of recognition through improved visibility, increased engagement with stakeholders and a shared understanding of the roles of centres and of best practice.

Contribution to EU Policies and Impact

This project has aimed to enhance the quality and effectiveness of the NARIC network by providing an opportunity to review policy developments in the past 15 years and evaluate their impact on recognition practice. By analysing the effect that these developments have had on current procedure and consulting on the findings across the network, the project group has been able to make recommendations on how to move forward as a Network. The recommendations demonstrate that there is still much to be done to enhance cooperation and build on the expertise of the centres in the field of recognition at an international and national level.

The prime objective of the study has been to contribute to policy development of recognition on the European agenda by reviewing the changing role of NARICs in relation to the role envisaged in the NARIC Charter; while the study has not proposed a revision of the Charter, it has identified clear areas for further review.

The contribution of the study to EU policies is evident in its recommendations regarding the role of NARICs in the next decade and beyond as they continue to contribute to European educational policies and initiatives including the EQF, ECVET, and ECTS.