



Recognition of professional qualifications

Difficulties in recognition of professional qualifications (RPQ) continue to be one obstacle to mobility of workers. In order to facilitate and accelerate the RPQ process the European Commission proposed to modernise the 2005 Directive and introduce the voluntary European Professional Card using the system for electronic exchange of administrative information.

Recognition of qualifications in the EU

In total, across the EU Member States (MS) there are about 800 [categories](#) of regulated professions. Access to these is often based on differing national laws, which can make exercising a profession in another country difficult. A 2011 [Eurobarometer](#) survey identified non-recognition of qualifications as one of the key obstacles to working abroad. Citizens expect RPQ to be easy and automatic, yet only 70% of requests meet with a quick and successful outcome. The EU problem-solving network (SOLVIT) [reports](#) RPQ problems as the third most common complaint. The [Agenda](#) for New Skills and Jobs, one of the [Europe 2020 strategy's](#) flagship initiatives, concluded that facilitating RPQ would contribute to a better match of skills and jobs on the EU labour market. The 2010 [Citizenship Report](#) identified inability to apply electronically for RPQ, delays in processes and resistance at national level as the main problems. Furthermore, the last three [Annual Growth Surveys](#) and the [Single Market Act](#) found obstacles to RPQ to be persistent.

Current legislative framework

European rules on mutual RPQ are defined in [Directive 2005/36](#), which introduced a scheme for [temporary mobility](#) allowing professionals to work on the basis of a declaration made in advance. The Directive also provides three systems for permanent RPQ: [automatic recognition](#) for professions with harmonised minimum training (seven professions such as architects, doctors and nurses), recognition based on [professional experience](#) (e.g. in the craft, commerce or industry sectors) and a [general system](#) for all other professions.

European Commission proposal

On 19 December 2011 the Commission proposed a [Modernised Professional Qualifications Directive](#) aimed at facilitating RPQ through: the introduction of the voluntary electronic [European professional card](#) (EPC), associated to a recognition procedure carried out within the [Internal Market Information System](#); better access to RPQ information for citizens through points of single contact; harmonising minimum training requirements for professions covered by automatic recognition; common training frameworks and tests to extend automatic recognition; a framework for partial access to regulated professions; mutual evaluation by MS of their regulated professions. Indeed, the Commission set out a [framework](#) for this review on 2 October 2013.

Stakeholder views

The European Economic and Social Committee [welcomed](#) the proposal but is concerned about possible overlaps or contradictions with existing RPQ [systems](#). Employers [call](#) for the number of regulated professions in Europe to be reduced. Medical authorities [support](#) the new alert mechanism covering health professionals prohibited from practice, but also argue that they should only be allowed to practice after explicit authorisation by the host MS. Real estate professionals [call](#) for widest possible application of the EPC.

European Parliament

The Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO) Committee adopted its [report](#) on the RPQ in January 2013 (rapporteur Bernadette Vergnaud, S&D, France). The agreement in [trilogue](#) was endorsed by the Committee in July. The [agreed text](#) provides for the grant of EPCs to members of professional bodies opting to use the system, and enables professionals to ask their home countries to arrange RPQ. It also allows language checks of health professionals. While the scope of the Directive was extended to unpaid traineeships, notaries appointed by official act of government are excluded.