

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002455/25
to the Commission
Peter Agius (PPE)
(18 June 2025)**

Subject: Students in Malta denied recognition of qualifications due to education authority's exclusion from the European register

The Malta Further and Higher Education Authority has recently been denied entry to the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education following administrative and procedural shortcomings.

Such shortcomings are certainly not attributable to students who dedicate time and money to their studies.

Should students pay the price for government incompetence?

They are indeed paying the price.

Hundreds of Maltese and foreign students studying in private colleges in Malta are, in fact, facing huge uncertainty and distress as their studies are no longer recognised abroad.

This situation poses a threat to the free movement of professionals and the mutual recognition of qualifications (Article 53(1) TFEU) to facilitate access to professional activities and to grant the conditions for the single market (Article 26 TFEU).

Given the above:

1. What urgent measures could the Commission take to resolve the situation in time for students' graduation in September this year?
2. In the absence of a speedy solution guaranteeing students' rights to enjoy free movement through the recognition of their qualifications, will the Commission immediately consider further action for the effective implementation of EU law in Malta, without delay?

Submitted: 18.6.2025

**Answer given by Executive Vice-President Mînzatu on behalf of the European Commission
(21 August 2025)**

Quality assurance is the core of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) under the Bologna process. Its members recently reiterated their commitment 'to promote more robust quality assurance of transnational education, in line with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), to protect the interests of students' ⁽¹⁾. It does not translate, however, into a legal obligation at EU level.

Council recommendations ⁽²⁾ emphasise the importance of external quality assurance conducted in line with the ESG and by independent quality assurance agencies registered with the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) ⁽³⁾.

Since Article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU) provides that education is the primary responsibility of Member States, it is for Malta to ensure that its quality assurance system is aligned with the ESG and to address shortcomings to register the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA) with the EQAR.

However, based on the EHEA commitments, higher education institutions in Malta, also private colleges, wishing to reassure their partners about educational quality and to facilitate recognition of their qualifications, can seek external evaluation of their programmes by any EQAR registered agency.

Professionals seeking to practice a profession in another Member State must apply for the recognition of their qualifications if the profession is regulated in that Member State.

In such case, the rules outlined in Directive 2005/36/EC ⁽⁴⁾ apply, under certain conditions. If the profession is not regulated, there is no obligation to follow a formal recognition process to practice the profession.

⁽¹⁾ Tirana Ministerial Communiqué — 2024.

⁽²⁾ Council Recommendation of 26 November 2018 on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education and training qualifications and the outcomes of learning periods abroad, OJ C 444, 10.12.2018, p. 1; Council Recommendation of 12 May 2025 on a European quality assurance and recognition system in higher education OJ C, C/2025/3006, 28.5.2025.

⁽³⁾ The EQAR is the official EHEA register for quality assurance agencies compliant with the ESG.

⁽⁴⁾ Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications (Text with EEA relevance) (OJ L255- 30-09-2005, p. 22).

The problem does not seem related to the application of recognition rules under EU law, but rather to the EQAR refusal to register MFHEA and as such should be addressed on national level in line with Member States' competences in this area.
