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Answer given by Executive Vice-President Minzatu
on behalf of the European Commission
(10.6.2026)

The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) was created under the intergovernmental Bologna Process, which comprises 47 countries cooperating on a voluntary basis. Therefore, it is not regulated by EU law and falls within the exclusive sphere of competence of the signatory countries. Whilst recognition based on robust quality assurance is the core of the EHEA, it is an obligation of Member States to oversee its implementation.

Moreover, Article 165(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) provides that the EU shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between Member States while fully respecting ‘the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organisation of education systems’, including recognition of degrees for the purpose of further learning (academic recognition of qualifications). It also applies to cases where qualifications are delivered through franchised or validated arrangements.

Finally, based on the available information, Staffordshire University is a university in the United Kingdom – a third country in relation to the EU. The initial recognition of a degree from a third country falls under the competence of the Member State in which the recognition application is submitted. The Commission has no authority to intervene in case of refusal by the Member State to recognise third country qualifications. Articles 49 and 56 TFEU do not apply in the present case.