

Certified European Environmental Professional

How far should ENEP go in the recognition of qualification standards of the environmental professional?

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As the lead network organization in Europe for environmental professionals, ENEP defines in its “2012 Business Plan” the principle objective “to promote adherence to environmental professional standards” as one of the essential prerequisites for achieving sustainability. The question remains how far should ENEP go in achieving this goal.

Over the last months ENEP representatives were able to follow the on-going debate within the EU-community in Brussels on the topic of mutual recognition of professional qualifications. As professionals looking at the European playground, we all are aware of the principle right of free movement of persons and services between EU Member States. For nationals of the Member States, this includes, in particular, the right to pursue a profession, in a self-employed or employed capacity, in a Member State other than the one in which they have obtained their professional qualifications. However, due to sometimes large differences between national qualification standards, many obstacles remain to the freedom of establishment, i.e. the numerous requirements of the EU Member States with regard to training or education of such professionals. That is why [article 53](#) of the Treaty on the functioning of the EU empowers the [Parliament](#) and the [Council](#) to issue directives for the mutual recognition of diplomas, certificates and other evidence of formal qualificationsⁱ.

With the Directive on the [recognition of professional qualifications](#), the Council applies to all nationals of a Member State, who wish to pursue a regulated profession in a Member State other than that in which they obtained their professional qualifications, on either a self-employed or employed basis. This Directive establishes rules according to which a Member State which makes access to or pursuit of [a regulated profession](#) in its territory contingent upon possession of specific professional qualifications (the host Member State) should recognise professional qualifications obtained in one or more other Member States (the home Member State) and which allow the holder of the said qualifications to pursue the same profession there, for access to and pursuit of that profession.

According to this directive, "[regulated profession](#)" is a professional activity or group of professional activities, access to which or the pursuit of which is subject to the possession of specific professional qualifications; in particular, the use of a professional title.

Also according to this directive, "[professional qualifications](#)" are qualifications attested by evidence of formal qualifications, an attestation of competence and/or professional experience.

In order to promote the free movement of professionals, while ensuring an adequate level of qualification, already various professional associations and organizations are able to propose [common platforms at European level](#), which define a set of criteria that make it possible to compensate for the widest range of substantial differences between the professional qualification skills in at least two thirds of the Member States including all the Member States which regulate that profession. These criteria may, for example, include requirements such as additional training, an adaptation period under supervised practice, an aptitude test, or a prescribed minimum level of professional practice, or combinations thereof.

For example, the freedom of movement and the mutual recognition of the evidence of formal qualifications of [doctors, nurses, dental practitioners, veterinary surgeons,](#)

midwives, pharmacists and architects are based on the fundamental principle of automatic recognition of the evidence of formal qualifications on the basis of coordinated minimum conditions for training. Directive 2005/36 adopts the principle of automatic recognition for medical and dental specialisations common to at least two Member States. The recognition of professional qualifications for lawyers for the purpose of immediate establishment under the professional title of the host Member State is covered by Directive 2005/36.

The qualification standards of environmental professionals are not (yet) mutual recognized on a EU-level, and therefore the free movement of environmental professionals between different EU Member States still is not regulated.

The need for environmental professionals to demonstrate their credentials is growing throughout the EU. As the lead association of environmental professionals in Europe, ENEP holds the unique position to ensure an adequate level of qualification by proposing such a common platform in order to promote the free movement of environmental professionals within Europe.

Step one is to have a formal discussion within the GA about the extent of interpretation of the principle objective of ENEP “to promote adherence to environmental professional standards”. Centrally within this discussion are the definitions to be given to the terms ‘*regulated environmental profession*’ and ‘*environmental professionals qualifications*’.

Let’s take a closer look to the American example at hand. The ***Academy of Board Certified Environmental Professionals*** (ABCEP) is a professional association dedicated to serving the environmental professional community. It is the lead organization in the US certifying environmental professionals; maintaining exemplary standards of ethics and technical practice; and supporting individuals, our profession and the public relying upon our services. Its primary mission is to confer the “Certified Environmental Professional”-credential to meritorious environmental professionals found to meet exemplary standards of ethics and technical practice. I strongly advice to those who have some time to visit the ABCEP-website: <http://www.abcep.org>, and read some more, in order to have a content-driven discussion during the upcoming GA.

i N. Moussis, “*Access to European Union law, economics, policies*”, chapter 6.5.2.