

**ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES
(ECOWAS)**

**GENERAL CONVENTION ON THE RECOGNITION AND
EQUIVALENCE OF DEGREES, DIPLOMAS, CERTIFICATES
AND OTHER QUALIFICATIONS IN ECOWAS
MEMBER STATES**

**EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT
DAKAR, SEPTEMBER 2002**

We, the Heads of State and Government of the Member States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS):

MINDFUL of Article 49 of the Economic Community of West African States Revised Treaty on co-operation in social and cultural matters;

MINDFUL of Decision A/DEC.11/5/82 on the establishment of an ad-hoc committee to determine the equivalence of certificates within ECOWAS;

MINDFUL of Protocol A/P1/7/87 on the cultural framework agreement for the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS);

MINDFUL of the Protocol of free movement of persons, right of residence and establishment;

GUIDED BY:

- The General Convention of the African and Malagasy Council for Higher Education (CAMES) on the automatic validity and the equivalence of certificates of higher education.
- The Convention of the West African Examination Council (WAEC).
- The Regional Convention on the recognition of studies and certificates, diplomas, degrees and other higher educational qualifications in African States (UNESCO), Arusha Regional Convention);

REAFFIRMING their common wish to work towards strengthening comprehension and co-operation among the peoples of the sub-region as a means of realising their aspirations to solidarity and greater fraternity;

CONVINCED that harmonisation of educational and training policies is a key factor in the promotion of cultural and scientific exchanges within the framework of **SUCH CO-OPERATION**;

RESOLVED to promote continued education and improve the quality of teaching;

CONVINCED that recognition of degrees, diplomas, certificates and other qualifications and of their equivalence is a prerequisite for increased mobility of students, teachers and specialists and a means of accelerating development in the field of education and achieving sub-regional integration;

HAVE AGREED AS FOLLOWS;

ARTICLE 1: DEFINITIONS

The following terms shall have the meanings assigned to them hereunder:

Community shall mean the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) established by Article 1.1 of the ECOWAS Treaty.

Member State or Member States shall mean a Member State or States of the Economic Community of West African States.

Host Member State shall mean the Member State or the country of residence of the holder of a qualification.

Member State, country of origin shall mean the Member State or country of origin of the migrant student or holder of the qualification, or of which he/she is a national.

High Contracting parties shall mean ECOWAS Member States.

Executive Secretariat shall mean the Executive Secretariat of the Economic Community as referred to under Article (8) of the Treaty.

Equivalence shall refer to qualifications corresponding to the same criteria and which may be considered to be identical.

Exemption shall refer to recognition of the basic value of other education systems even where qualifications do not correspond or are not strictly identical. In this context exemption means exceptionally permitted to pursue studies under certain conditions.

Comparability shall mean recognition of qualifications with the same academic value; the element of comparison exists with regard to the level and stage of training.

Partial Studies shall mean education of partial duration or consent by comparison with the norms prevailing in the institution in which it is acquired. Recognition may be granted in accordance with the level of education attained by the student as approved by the State granting recognition.

Stage of Training shall mean the sum of academic studies or personal experience and achievements culminating in attainment of the requisite level of maturity and skill to enable the trainee to accede to the next stage of studies, or to take up appointment and perform such duties as are consonant with the stage attained if wishing to embark upon a profession.

ARTICLE 2: AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the Convention shall be;

- To promote regional co-operation with regard to the assessment and recognition of degrees, diplomas, certificates and other qualifications, social and cultural integration embarked upon by ECOWAS.
- To widen co-operation among people and strengthen collaboration in the use of manpower, thereby reducing brain drain and promoting harmonious development.
- To facilitate the exchange of skills and the pursuit of studies.

ARTICLE 3: UNDERTAKING GIVEN BY MEMEBER STATES

Member States of the Community hereby undertake:

1. AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL

- a) to recognise the validity or equivalence of degrees awarded by their respective training institutions.
- b) To grant dispensation or exemption with a view to the pursuance of studies under certain conditions where linguistic problems have been resolved.
- c) To accept comparability through recognition of certificates with the same academic value, the right of residence being already granted.
- d) To promote exchange of information and documentation on studies, certificates, diplomas and other qualifications from higher institutions.

2. AT NATIONAL LEVEL

- a) inform the Executive Secretariat and Member States of the terms under which studies partially completed in institutions of the other contracting parties may be recognised for the purpose of pursuing studies in other Member States.
- b) to give or maintain in their training institutions covered by the Convention, Educational training and organisation which complies with international standards while taking into account the realities of the African context.
- c) to ensure effective implementation of this Convention through existing national agencies or bodies to be established for that purpose.
- d) to provide national agencies with the necessary means to carry out their duties of collation, analysis and categorisation of all information on studies and certificates higher education.
- e) to actively involve, whenever possible, relevant governmental and non-governmental sectors, particularly universities and training institutions, in the activities of national agencies.

ARTICLE 4 : CONDITIONS FOR VALIDITY, EQUIVALENCE AND COMPARABILITY

The following main criteria are to be complied with:

- a) Comparable status of establishment awarding the degree, including level of equipment and qualification of teachers.

- b) Similar conditions of entry to courses.
- c) Comparability of duration of studies/academic value.
- d) Similar course contents, study programmes, and assessment method for aptitude and knowledge.

ARTICLE 5: LIST OF QUALIFICATION.

The list of degrees, diplomas, and other qualifications and grades which are equivalent, comparable or granted dispensation shall be attached to this Convention after approval by the Council of Ministers.

ARTICLE 6: DATA COLLECTION

The Executive Secretariat shall collaborate with competent national bodies to compile the necessary data for a periodic update of this list.

The Council of Ministers is empowered to approve any future amendment to this list.

ARTICLE 7. FURTHER STUDIES

(Any national of a Member State whose certificate was obtained outside ECOWAS may take advantage of such provisions as may be applicable, provided the certificates are recognised in the country of award and in the Member State where he/she wishes to continue his/her studies).

ARTICLE 8: FINAL PROVISIONS

(This Convention shall replace all other conventions and treaties on the subject which may have been signed between ECOWAS Member States.

The Convention shall not, however, in any manner affect the provisions of

Treaties and conventions already signed between Member States of the Community and third countries and/or international bodies).

ARTICLE 9: REVISION AND AMENDMENT

1. Any party to this Convention may submit proposal for amendment or revision of this Convention.
2. Any such proposal shall communicate them to other Member States not later than thirty days after the receipt of such proposals. Amendments or revisions shall considered by the Heads of State and Government after Parties have been given a month's notice thereof.

ARTICLE 10. ENTRY INTO FORCE

- a) This Convention shall enter into force, provisionally, upon signature by Heads of States and Government and definitively upon ratification by at least (8) signatory states, in accordance with the constitutional procedures of each Member State.
- b) This Convention and the instruments of ratification shall be deposited with the Executive Secretariat of the Community which shall transmit certified true copies of the document to Member States and notify them of the dates of deposit of the instruments of ratification. The Executive Secretariat shall communicate to Member States all information regarding measures taken by each Member States for the enforcement of the Convention.

IN FAITH WHEREOF, We Heads of State and Government of the Member States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have signed this Convention.

Done at Abuja, this 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 Day of 1 1 1 1 .1 2001 .

In single original in English and French, both texts being equally authentic.