



**ECCE  
PROFESSIONAL  
RECOGNITION  
AGREEMENT**

**DRAFT**

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## 1. Civil Engineering Today

The civil engineering profession across Europe has undergone significant and rapid changes in the past decades that have increased the body of knowledge required of the profession to include new areas such as environment, sustainable management, health, safety, energy, planning, operation, etc.

These changes have created an environment in which professional civil engineers are required to possess greater breadth of understanding, together with increased specialized technical competence than that required of previous generations.

These changes have prompted debates about the adequacy of civil engineering study, and whether courses should be lengthened. Many countries have increased the period of academic study required of their professional civil engineers, as a consequence of the Lisbon Declaration and other initiatives around the world.

## 2. Civil Engineering Studies Today & Beyond

Invariably, different countries have adopted different approaches to determining the knowledge requirements for their civil engineers. As a consequence, academic degrees vary in content and duration from country to country.

Southern and Eastern European countries tend to favour a broad academic formation, with, consequently, greater than average duration of academic study. Whereas Central and Northern European countries have tended to adopt more specialized degrees as well as offering shorter duration diplomas. Several countries offer both broad content and specialized diplomas.

This variation in academic content has led to different national expectations of civil engineers operating across Europe. This variation can be shown when considering the different engineering acts within infrastructure planning, design, construction, operation, maintenance, and decommissioning/demolition practiced by civil engineers across Europe. This is illustrated in the ECCE Civil Engineering Carta (annex I).

### 3. Work in a Foreign Country

Civil engineering professionals are frequently assigned to international projects and can be expected to work abroad, wherever their expertise is needed. This is especially relevant for Europe, with its open borders policy encouraging free circulation of licensed civil engineering professionals.

Nowadays, civil engineering professionals working abroad must consider the following aspects of practicing their profession:

- a) **Language** – Civil engineering acts must be performed in the host's country language (unless otherwise agreed);
- b) **Codes and Ethics** – Civil engineering acts must be performed according to the host country's technical codes and codes/rules of ethics (unless otherwise stated);
- c) **Professional Recognition** – Professional civil engineers may require formal professional recognition in the host country in order to practice and/or perform certain civil engineering acts, according to each country's professional regulations. **Rules for professional recognition were defined in the *European Directive 2005/36/EC*.**

## 4. Issues on Professional Recognition

### 4.1 Regulated Countries

The civil engineering profession (or some acts of civil engineering) is regulated in some European countries (typically the southern and eastern European countries) and not in others (see Annex II).

In regulated countries, a professional civil engineer must be recognized and registered with a *Competent Authority* (association or ministry) to practice or undertake some designated acts. In non-regulated countries, any person may practice as a civil engineer. To complicate matters further, some “un-regulated” countries have protected titles for their professional engineers, and these are treated, for the purposes of the application of the European Directive, as regulated.

Difficulties typically arise with the migration of professional civil engineers from non-regulated to regulated countries.

## 4.2 Academic Recognition

### a) The Directive

Where a civil engineer holds the required formal academic qualifications to practice the profession of civil engineer in a regulated country, the Directive requires that they must be permitted access to and pursuit of that profession in another Member State, under the same conditions as apply to its nationals.

Where a civil engineer has pursued the profession in an unregulated country, they must possess evidence that they hold the necessary formal qualifications and have practised the profession on a full time basis for at least two years during the previous ten years.

Article 11 of the Directive stipulates five different levels of formal qualification which must be recognised by the Host state. Formal qualifications are diplomas which certify successful completion of a post-secondary course at a university or establishment of higher education for a defined duration, as well as the professional training which may be required in addition to the post-secondary course. The most common duration of these are diplomas of at least 3 and not more than 4 years, and diplomas of at least 4 years.

## **b) The Academic Equivalence**

Considering only the academic diploma, any civil engineering professional can always ask the recognition (equivalence) of his academic diploma by a university of a regulated country. If approved, this will lead to a situation where he can be, then recognized by the *Competent Authority* of that country as a national civil engineering professional.

This procedure's greatest drawback is that differences between the candidates' home and host country diplomas (duration, disciplines studied) make unachievable a direct recognition obliging the candidate to complete several other disciplines to get the hosts' country diploma.

It must be noted that even with Bologna schema this academic equivalence problem is not solved because, besides the number of years, which are becoming similar, the recognition of academic degrees is only obtained through academic contents similarity and not just through sheer diploma naming coincidence.



### 4.3 Professional Recognition

A civil engineer who is professionally qualified to work in one Member State (either by being registered in a regulated country or by having been permitted to pursue the profession for at least 2 years in an unregulated country) **must apply for recognition of their professional qualification to the competent authority if they wish to work in a regulated country.**

**The competent authority must assess the equivalence of the engineer's formal qualifications and professional experience** against their requirements for registration, and may invite the applicant to provide information concerning his training to the extent necessary in order to determine the existence of potential substantial differences with the required national training (Annex VII of the Directive). Where any substantial differences are identified, the competent authority must offer the applicant the choice of completing either an adaptation period or an aptitude test.

**The differences between the candidates' specialized home country diploma (knowledge of some civil engineering acts) and host country's wide scope diplomas (duration, disciplines studied) make unachievable a total professional recognition** as that recognition would entitle him to perform acts for which he has not been prepared for.

**One possible further qualifier of this**, which has been applied through Spain's legal system **after consulting the European Tribunal**, is to caveat the ability of the professional civil engineer to practice based upon the assessment of the individual's ability to satisfy the requirements of the host country, and **to permit partial professional recognition** (only some acts of civil engineering). Provided that the civil engineer is advised of the deficiency in knowledge, and given the opportunity to address this shortfall, then this would appear to be a logical and equitable solution.

## 5. The ECCE Proposal

To assist professional bodies and regulatory authorities in the assessment of the suitability of professional civil engineers from other European countries to work in the host country, in accordance with the Directive, ECCE proposes the exchange of information relating to the formation of professional civil engineers amongst its member countries. This would facilitate the host country in making this assessment, recognizing, of course, that each individual should be assessed individually, and that they might possess demonstrable knowledge and competence in other areas.

This means that regulated countries through their competent authority, would base the professional recognition of a foreign candidate, in that country, performed in an individual assessment basis, as a **Civil Engineering Professional entitled to perform the following acts .....**

## 6. ECCE Professional Recognition System

### 6.1 Preliminary

In furtherance of this, competent authorities in regulated countries could adapt their procedures to recognize “**Civil Engineers who may practice specified acts**”.

### 6.2 The Candidate

A candidate to professional recognition can be any civil engineer that is recognized as such, in his own ECCE country.

### 6.3 ECCE Card (Certificate)

ECCE member countries may choose to facilitate this, by issuing a certificate to professional civil engineers.

This document (Annex III) must be released by the ECCE member of the country in which the candidates' degree was obtained, certifying that the candidate:

- a) has a diploma from a recognized civil engineering professional course in that country;
- b) according to the national law he is a licensed **civil engineering professional, entitled to perform the following acts ... in that ECCE member's country.** Acts indicated will be no less than those defined in the candidates' application.
- c) Is associated or registered in ECCE's member country organization.

This document aims to provide easier recognition procedures by the host country of the entitlement of the candidates' capacity to perform civil engineering acts.

## 6.4 Application to Recognition

The process of professional recognition of a civil engineering professional in a regulated or non-regulated host country, would begin by submitting his application to the competent authority (regulated) or ECCE member (non regulated) of the host country (see Annex II) with the following documents:

- a) Application form (prepared by host country), **indicating the civil engineering acts** for which he wants to be entitled to perform;
- b) **ECCE Card**.
- c) Civil Engineering **academic Diploma** with course duration and academic list of disciplines;
- d) **Curriculum Vitae** (including any additional studies);
- e) Personal **Declaration** indicating that he understands that civil engineering acts performed in the host country will be performed in **respect of its technical codes and ethics and in the host's country language**. (unless otherwise stated);

## 6.5 Recognition

Based on the candidates' application documents, the competent authority (regulated countries) or ECCE member (non-regulated) should define the decision related to the professional recognition of the candidate, considering:

- a) Accepted as **Civil Engineering Professional entitled to perform the following acts ...**
- b) Accepted after reaching defined steps.

The conditional acceptance b) must be similar to the one existing for national civil engineer candidates (European Directive).

## 7. Implementation of the Agreement

This ECCE professional recognition system will be adopted among the ECCE non regulated countries (signed by the ECCE members) and the regulated countries (signed by the *Competent Authorities* and the ECCE members).

This agreement will not interfere with any bilateral recognition agreements between ECCE member countries now in use, though they should be adapted to this accord framework in the future.

The scope of the agreement between ECCE countries is one of exchange of information to facilitate the recognition of a professional civil engineer to practise but not to imply automatic and caveated recognition.

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