

Mutual Recognition of Professional Qualifications: The European Union System

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SUMMARY

The European Union developed a system for the mutual recognition of professional qualifications in order to ensure the success of the Single European Market. There was already in place specific Directives based on the principle of harmonisation, relating to only a few professions (including Architects) but in order to speed up the process, a General Directive introduced a system applicable to all other professions was introduced.

This system allows those professionals who meet the criteria within the General Directive to move within Europe by claiming access to the national title of professionals who do the same work. The system is based on the education and/or professional diplomas awarded in each Member State and the nature of the activities which comprises the profession in each Member State.

It relies heavily on national governments or professional associations to administer the system, but since its introduction, serious flaws have been identified in its implementation. The system is now undergoing reform, but the basics remain the same – that of a legally imposed framework based on professional education and experience. However, to ensure its success, there must be a willingness on the part of all concerned to support both the principle and the spirit of mutual recognition.

This paper details both the principles of mutual recognition and the system which operates within the EU, and also discusses reciprocity agreement, harmonisation and certification as alternative means to achieving the same end.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Within Europe during the 1960s, negotiations were underway to achieve harmonisation of the structure and content of professional education and training for a number of professions, and the EU introduced seven sectoral directives which applied to a number of medical-related professions and also Architects (Plimmer & Gronow, 1992). However, this method of allowing for the free movement of professionals was time-consuming and complex. In order to ensure the completion of the Single Market, the EU introduced a General Directive which imposed a system of mutual recognition which would apply to all professions and which would be administered by stated organisations in each Member State.

This reflects the fact that every country requires a different kind of professional education and training for their surveyors (Plimmer & Gronow 1992) and that the Directive does not require any changes to those systems of education.

Mutual recognition of professional qualifications is one of several devices which is used to allow professionals to respond to the globalisation of services. Currently, there is specific pressure from the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to introduce regulations towards the liberalisation of trade (Enemark, 1999) with mutual recognition as the preferred model.

This paper discusses the European system of mutual recognition and identifies the problems which have resulted in the current revision of its provisions.

2. PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Surveying is a very old profession within the world and, as is to be expected, the professional education and training of surveyors reflects both national education systems and the needs of the national (and often the local) labour markets. However, the components of the process of becoming a surveyor (irrespective of the surveying specialism) seems to be relatively standardised in many countries (Allen, 1995)

Thus, surveyors are normally graduates from University-level education. In some countries e.g. the United Kingdom, there are university courses at undergraduate level (bac + 3) which lead to academic qualifications which, themselves, are accredited by professional organisations or recognised by state authorities. In other countries, e.g. Denmark, the level of university education required is at Masters (bac + 5). This period of academic study is normally complemented by a period of supervised work experience during which the trainee surveyor gains experience and is tested in various relevant competencies. Only once satisfactory academic and practice standards have been achieved, is the surveyor granted

professional status, which often involves or includes being admitted to membership of professional organisations.

The responsibility for the professional education and training of surveyors is a tripartite responsibility, shared between the academic educators (who tend to provide the technical education and professional theory); the practitioner employers (who ensure that theory is put into practice and that necessary practical skills are enhanced) and the state or private institution (which provides the public recognition of qualifications, ensures standards and the professional focus, often for both pre- and post-qualificational continuing professional development). Thus, while surveyors are the products of a variety of national pre-qualificational education and training programmes, there is a large degree of commonality in the process required for qualification (Plimmer, 2001).

The process of mutual recognition relies on these existing parties to the education process to achieve implementation.

3. MUTUAL RECOGNITION

Mutual recognition of professional qualifications means that the qualifications gained in one country (the home country) are recognised in another country (the host country). It is a process which avoids a professional from re-qualifying in each EU Member State, because the professional qualification which the applicant gained in one EU country (the home country) is assumed to be as good as if it had been awarded in the host country.

The effect of this is that access to a regulated profession cannot be denied to an applicant from another Member State simply because the individual does not hold the host nation's own professional qualification, subject to the terms of the Directive.

The implementation of the EU's system of mutual recognition does not depend on co-ordination of education and training for professions within the EU. Its implementation is based on mutual respect and mutual trust and relies on Member States' acceptance of the quality of education and specifically equivalent professional qualifications gained in other Member States.

However, mutual recognition only works, however, where there is substantial commonality between the nature of the professional activities (and therefore the professional education and training which underpins the professional qualification) in the professions in both the home country and the host country. Where there are minor differences in those professional activities, the Directive allows for the applicant to make good the deficiency, either by undertaking an aptitude test or by undergoing a period of supervised work experience. Both of these are discussed further below.

The system of mutual recognition was deemed vital to achieve the free movement of professionals within the Single European Market. The system therefore envisages that professionals will move from one country to another in connection with their work. However,

there is no requirement within the Directive for a language skill because mutual recognition is merely about qualifications.

According to Enemark and Plimmer (2002) to understand the nature of mutual recognition it is useful to look at the different working situations. Thus:

- Recognition does not relate to the situation of “getting a job”. In general, employment is a matter between the employer and the employee. Getting a work permit in another country may be restricted by national regulations of immigration, but that has nothing to do with recognition of professional qualifications.
- Recognition may, however, relate to the situation where a foreign employee wants to become a member of the professional organisation in the host country, and thereby enjoy the benefits of being recognised as an equal professional and sharing the same rights e.g. with regard to salary agreements.
- Recognition becomes even more important when a professional wants to practise – e.g. setting up a company – in the host country. Recognition of professional competence may then represent a vital competitive element in terms of marketing services to the clients.
- Finally, recognition becomes crucial when a professional wants to practise within a licensed area (typically cadastral surveys) in the host country. The license may be granted by a state agency or by a professional body. In any case, however, the recognition will represent the key itself for working in the regulated area.

The EU system of mutual recognition is imposed by a legal framework – a Directive – and all EU Member States are required either to adopt the Directive into their national law or to implement the effect of the Directive within their legislative framework. This allows countries to reflect the outcome of the Directive, but using procedures which are appropriate for their own systems.

According to EU statistics (Commission of the European Communities, 2000: 14), the following (individually or in combination) are some of the reasons for migration:

- the existence of professionals in the same category;
- an equivalent corresponding level of qualifications under the Directive;
- geographical proximity;
- cultural similarity.

The complexity of the Directive and its procedures has been criticised in the light of the relatively few professionals who avail themselves of its rights. However, the Commission of the European Communities takes a different view:

“Volumes of migration may not be critical to an evaluation of the General System directives . . . Individuals, in whatever professional walk of life can justifiably expect support from Community law for the facilitation of migration within the European Union.” (*ibid.* 14-5)

3. EU GENERAL DIRECTIVE

The European Council's Directive on a general system for the recognition of higher education diplomas awarded on completion of professional education and training of at least three years' duration (European Council, 1988) (the Directive) came into effect in January 1991. It adopts a general rather than a sectoral approach and applies to all professions:

- to which access is in some way restricted;
- for which at least three years higher education is required; and
- for which a specific sectoral directive does not already exist e.g. it does not apply to Architects who have their own sectoral directive.

The Directive is therefore applicable to all regulated professions for which a minimum three-year period of higher education is required. This is defined as:

“. . . a post-secondary course of at least three years' duration or of an equivalent duration part-time, at a university or establishment of higher education or other establishment of similar level . . . “ (European Council 1988, Art 1)

Under the terms of the Directive, no longer can access to a regulated profession be denied an applicant from another Member State merely because that individual does not hold the host nation's own professional qualifications, if the individual:

- holds the diploma required in another Member State for the pursuit of the profession in question; and
- has pursued that profession full-time for two years during the previous ten years in another Member State which does not regulate that profession and possesses evidence of a diploma (as defined) (European Council, 1989, Art 3)

The Directive applies to those who practice a “corresponding profession”, i.e. “. . . a profession the pursuit of which in another Member State includes a substantial number of professional activities comprised in the pursuit of the profession in the [host member state] which is the subject of the migrant's application.” (HMSO, 1991, reg. 2 (1))

It is therefore vital to investigate the nature of the profession of applicants in their home Member State and to compare that with the profession to which access is sought. Provided that there is “substantial” commonality, any discrepancies between the length of professional experience or technical content of the diploma can be made good by an additional period of professional experience or an adaptation mechanism.

For the surveying profession, where applicable, it is for the applicant to choose between an adaptation period and an aptitude test.

3.1 Adaptation Mechanism

Where the matters covered by the professional education and training of an applicant from another Member State, differ substantially from those required by the diploma of a national application, it is necessary for an applicant to make up for deficiencies through an adaptation mechanism.

This can take the form of either an adaptation period, which is a period of professional practice under the supervision of a qualified member of the profession; or an aptitude test, which covers only those items of professional knowledge which are lacking.

There is a responsibility on the professional body (designated authority) to which the applicant has applied to establish which subjects need to be covered by the adaptation mechanism, and may test only those subjects the knowledge of which is essential for the pursuit of the profession in that Member State, together with knowledge of the relevant rules of professional conduct (HMSO, 1991, reg. 7 (2)).

It is not possible for an applicant to be required to under both a period of professional experience and one of the adaptation mechanisms.

3.2 Designated Authority

The Directive was implemented in the UK by Regulation (HMSO, 1991) in 1991. These regulations recognised that there are British professions which are regulated by law and by public authority e.g. lawyers and auditor. However, there are many professions which are regulated by professional bodies incorporated by Royal Charter, including The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. For such professions, where the profession is regulated by virtue of the admission of an applicant to membership of the body concerned, together with the grant by the body of the right to use the title and abbreviatory letters indicated

The profession of surveying is not regulated in the UK – anyone can call themselves a surveyor and set up in practice. However, only those who have qualified and been admitted into membership of The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors can call themselves a Chartered Surveyor and hold one of the several designatory letters e.g. FRICS. Thus, it is the profession of "Chartered Surveying", the right to the title "Chartered Surveyor" and to the use of the designatory letters e.g. FRICS, which are protected by the Directive and the Regulations.

In accordance with the requirements of the Directive, the Regulations (*ibid.*, reg. 5 (1)) require a designatory authority not to refuse to authorise, on the grounds on inadequate qualifications, an applicant from another EU Member State to practice the profession of Chartered Surveying under the same conditions as apply to a UK national applicant.

It is important to remember that the Directive deals only with matters of professional qualification. If there are other pre-requisites to membership or qualification (e.g.

demonstrations of good character, the payment of fees), then these must be satisfied separately.

3.2 Extension of the Provisions of the General Directive

In 1992, a Council Directive (92/51/EEC) extended the General Directive to cover two other levels of education and training:

- secondary or occupational experience (certificate); and
- short, post-secondary training (diploma). (Commission of the European Communities, 2000: 5).

“. . . and the system of “passerelle” between this directive and the First General System directive all presented major new challenges to the application of mutual recognition by the Member States . . . “ (*ibid.*)

The basic principles remain the same: a person who is fully qualified to carry out a profession in one Member State is assumed to possess the necessary qualifications to carry out the profession in another Member State. (*ibid.*)

In addition, the 1992 Directive:

- the diploma was extended to courses whose effective level was comparable to that of corresponding short higher education courses, even though they were not regarded as higher education in the Member States of origin;
- an upper limit was set on diploma equivalences between levels 2 and 3, when in the host country the course exceeded four years duration;
- a choice was included between the aptitude test and work experience within the certificate level;

In addition to problems caused by delays of implementation, issues which remain to be resolved include:

- clarification from the Court of Justice on language requirements (*ibid.*: 6); and
- applications for exemption from the principle that the migrant has the choice of adaptation mechanism where there is substantial differences between the migrant’s qualification and that required by the host Member State (*ibid.*).

There has also been criticism about the time and work involved in updating the Directive.

4. ISSUES FOR SURVEYING IN EUROPE

The imposition of a legal framework on the Member States of the European Union could have been considered as a somewhat draconian measure. As indicated above, the Directive was seen as a device to ensure that the Single European Market was irreversible. It is therefore not surprising that there have been problems with its implementation.

Some of the issues challenged the fundamental principles of the Directive, for example, some countries required citizenship before they would accept applications under it. However, there were unanticipated problems, some of which are outlined below.

4.1 Corresponding Profession

One of the major issues for the implementation of the EU Directive is that of the corresponding profession. Surveying professions and the professional activities they comprise develop in response to the needs of the local and national environment, and it is unreasonable to expect that all surveying professions in all the EU Member States will comprise exactly the same professional activities.

Plimmer (2001) compares and contrasts the variety of professional activities within the surveying practices of the then 15 EU Member States. One of the problems which this causes can be demonstrated by the position of UK Chartered Building Surveyors, who are unable to use the Directive to acquire comparable professional qualifications in the continent-based EU Member States, because a significant portion of their professional activities are undertaken by Architects, for whom a specific sectoral directive exists.

It seems possible, though, that if the proposed amendments to the system, then there may be a better chance of co-ordination between the two professions.

4.2 Administration

According to the Commission of the European Communities (2000: 29), ". . . the way in which a recognition system is administered can be as important as the underlying law in terms of the conditions applied to market access. In this respect, a degree of clear objectivity involved in all aspects of a recognition process, the manner in which the process of recognition is administered, the reality of the appreciation given to the abilities and experience of each candidate and the degree of explanation given to the decisions taken, all constitute elements which contribute to the reasonable character of a recognition procedure and the level of its acceptability to those subject to it."

5. FUTURE REFORM

Debate is currently underway to introduce a more flexible and automatic procedure based on common platforms established by professional associations at European level, which stem from increased co-operation between the public and private sectors. This would speed up the processing of requests for recognition of qualifications. (Anon, 2004)

The new Directive would replace fifteen existing directives in the field of recognition of professional qualifications, and agreed criteria would be introduced to bridge the differences between national and training conditions, thus making it easier for such professionals as real estate agents to work in another Member State (*ibid.*)

“The proposed Directive establishes the principles of the free provision of services under the original professional title, subject to certain conditions with a view to protecting service users. According to the proposal, any nationals of a Member State legally established in a given Member State may, in principle, provide services on a temporary and occasional basis in another Member State under their original professional title, without having to apply for recognition of their qualifications. They would, however, have to comply with certain obligations to provide the recipients of the services and the administration concerned with information.” (*ibid.*)

The proposed update also provides for developing co-operation amongst national administrations and between them and the Commission, with a view to informing citizens of their rights and resolving any difficulties they might encounter in obtaining recognition of their professional qualifications.

6. TOWARDS AN INTERNATIONAL SURVEYOR

It is clear that portability of professional qualifications is important for surveyors, whether they chose to work within a regional or an international marketplace, and therefore, surveyors have a major interest in ensuring that a flexible and convenient method of achieving the free movement of professionals across national borders is established.

One of the major problems in achieving an international surveyor is that there are many different kinds of surveyors, all of whom have an important role to play as professionals in the measurement, assembling, planning, administration, use, transfer, disposal, development and redevelopment, and all financial aspects of landed property, including the management of the construction process (based on FIG, 1991 p. 9).

The first step to achieving the international surveyor is, therefore, to recognise that we are in fact attempting to achieve several different kinds of global surveyors, who are all united in their responsibility for “land” (defined in its broadest sense), in their level of professionalism and in their common goal to ensure the effective and efficient management of a highly finite and valuable resource on behalf of their clients and the wider public.

We must therefore accept that, in order to achieve the free movement of surveyors world-wide, we need to produce a number of different kinds of international surveyors, all of whom retain a common code of conduct, of ethics, professionalism, and probably a common pre-qualificational educational structure (e.g. a minimum period of tertiary professional education and a minimum period of supervised work experience), but who pursue different aspects of surveying activities (e.g. spatial information management, valuation, construction economics).

We cannot therefore negotiate a single professional qualification for surveyors. What we must rely on are processes for achieving free movement across national borders. Mutual recognition is the process adopted (and currently refined) by the European Union. But there are other options which have already been implemented in order to achieve the free movement of surveyors within the world, these include harmonisation of professional

qualifications, reciprocity agreements and certification. Each has its advantages and disadvantages.

6.1 Reciprocity Agreements

There are agreements reached between surveying organisations in different countries under which appropriately qualified surveyors from one country can have their professional qualifications recognised in another country. For example, The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors negotiated reciprocity agreements with the Appraisal Institute of Canada, The New Zealand Institute of Valuers and the Australian Institute of Quantity Surveyors, amongst others.

Each agreement was reached after a full and frank exchange of correspondence which establishing the essential nature of the professional education and training of surveyors leading up to membership of the representing organisations and also details of post-qualificational requirements. The terms of some of the reciprocity agreements require an applicant to undertake a professional examination in an appropriate (normally law-based) subject, but all of them require a period of work experience, supervised by a member of the host surveying organisation followed by a professional interview.

However, this process is relatively slow to implement, highly selective in terms of freedom of movement and (as implemented by the RICS) subject to review and/or abandonment.

6.2 Harmonisation of Qualifications

One of the choices to achieving free movement is to ensure that all surveyors have the same qualifications. This means that they are required to follow an identical programme of professional education and training, to abide by largely similar procedures and practices and to lobby governments, clients and other interested persons to ensure that this qualification is recognised world-wide as being the appropriate one for surveyors.

For neatness and for uniformity, this solution is ideal. Every geomatic surveyor, for example, would follow a largely identical academic course in every university in the world which offers geomatic surveying qualifications. Every graduate undertakes the same kind of supervised work experience for the same length of time and supplements the academic learning with work-based skills – all broadly similar. Entry would be to a single qualification, subject to a standard requirement for codes of conduct, monitoring of professional conduct, continuing professional development etc., which would be undertaken in a uniform manner by each nation's surveying governing or representative body. This process is known as harmonisation of qualifications and there is logic behind such a theory. For a discipline which has a large technical base, harmonisation is particularly attractive.

However, the practicalities of implementing it are, if the European Union's experience is anything to go by, horrendous. Harmonisation requires that the rules which apply in one country apply in all of the others and, in advance of the drive to achieve the Single European Union (which was only really begun in earnest in 1982 (Plimmer, 1991 at p. 46)),

harmonisation had been the device for achieving the free movement of professionals in Europe (Commission of the European Communities, 1988, paras. 61-63). Harmonisation involved detailed discussions between all of the (then) twelve member states to establish a European Standard for each profession, so that the same rules are acceptable and applicable in each member state. This led, inevitably, to much negotiation and delay.

For Architects, for example, harmonisation was achieved by the negotiation of a specific directive dealing solely with their qualifications (professional education, training and practice) and which means that anyone who achieves the education and training required of an architect in any of the Member States must be accepted as being professionally qualified to practice as an architect in any of the other member states. The Architects' directive took 17 years to agree, before being adopted in 1985. A directive for Engineers had been in negotiation since 1969 before being abandoned, in part because of the implementation of the EU's general system for the mutual recognition of professional qualifications. In fact, sectoral directives within the European Union exist only for architects, dental practitioners, general practitioners, midwives, nurses responsible for general care, pharmacists and veterinary surgeons (DTI, 1988 p. 40). The importance of the sectoral directive is that anyone qualified, say, as an architect in any member state is able to perform that professional activity in any other member state without having to undergo any additional professional education or training and, should an architect, educated and qualified in a mainland European member state apply to the Royal Institute of British Architects, the application cannot be rejected on the grounds of inadequate qualifications.

Thus, the harmonisation of qualifications which is implemented in the EU by sectoral directives permits free movement of professionals by requiring that professional education and training (and thereby qualifications) in one member state be the same as those in all other member states, with no further investigation. Obviously, if other requirements are imposed on members of that professional organisation, these too have to be met. The proposed directive to reform the current EU system looks to be abandoning sectoral directives.

However, even with sectoral directives, there continue to be problems implementing their terms. Inevitably, pre-qualification professional education and training (particularly if it is based on academic courses) is subject to periodic change and harmonisation requires that such changes are subject to renewed negotiation. It seems, therefore, that even when there are legal requirements to enforce the free movement of professionals between member states which have negotiated a common programme of professional education and training and also have a common and agreed binding legal, economic and social system, free movement of professionals between different countries is not assured.

As part of their policy to ensure that the single European market was irreversible, the European Commission decided that it could not wait for all professions to negotiate their own harmonisation of professional qualifications and, I suggest, that if the European Architects' experience is anything to go by, neither can surveyors.

6.3 Certification

Certification involves an additional process of testing and award of an internationally-recognised certificate. Agreement needs to be reached between those bodies which award national qualifications (normally professional associations and/or government agencies) on the content of a common educational process and syllabus. Examinations need to be set up and administered nationally so that candidates can gain the international certificate. Inevitably it tends to be the breadth of issues which is covered in the educational process so that candidates have an understanding of international issues. There is, however, limited opportunity to demonstrate detailed knowledge of other countries' technical systems.

Certification involves an additional level of education, qualification and administration which, it can be argued, is unnecessary for those who already have achieved professional status. Nevertheless, it is popular, and interest is growing within Europe to develop certification for specific kinds of surveyors e.g. valuers/appraisers who may be employed within different EU countries to undertake specific functions e.g. valuations for bank lending.

6.4 Mutual Recognition of Qualifications

The system which the European Union decided to adopt was mutual recognition of professional qualifications, based on certain assumptions and principles. These are firstly that of "recognition . . . of the essential equivalence of the objectives of national legislation" (Commission of the European Communities, 1985, para. 63) and therefore of the principle of the comparability of university studies between member states (op. cit. para. 93). The second principle on which mutual recognition is based, is mutual trust between member states.

Thus, unlike harmonisation, mutual recognition does not mean that all rules are the same in all member states. Mutual recognition means accepting the standards which are the norm in all the other member states in the Union and the principle relies heavily on the political willingness of member states to respect the principle of free movement across technical barriers.

The EU system of mutual recognition applies only to practitioners who hold a specified qualification at an appropriate academic level (refer Plimmer (1990) and Plimmer (1992) for details of the terms of the original Directive). Similarly, the EU Directive also recognises that its provisions only apply to "corresponding professions" i.e. a profession in another member state which includes a substantial number of the professional activities comprised in the profession in the host member state. Thus, it is necessary to ensure that there is a substantial degree of commonality between the professional activities of any "profession" if the terms of the Directive are to achieve mutual recognition.

Recent improvements both introduced and proposed seem likely to improve the flexibility and the ease of implementation of the process. Certainly, the EU's experience with mutual recognition since 1991 has not resulted in widespread calls for its replacement or abandonment.

6.5 Analysis

Each of the four methods for enabling professionals to practice in other countries which have been described above has inherent problems.

Reciprocity agreements tend to operate for the benefit of surveyors in no more than two countries which tend to have very similar surveying professions. They are (by definition) negotiated on an individual basis, and their influence, as providers of global free movement, is, therefore, severely restricted. Nevertheless, they demonstrate that free movement can be achieved to a limited extent when like-minded professional organisations have an incentive to provide access to each other's professional qualifications for their members. The principles of accessibility and the willingness of surveying organisations to come to such agreements are, therefore, demonstrated.

Harmonisation in theory is ideal, but in practice is a tortuous and lengthy procedure. Partly because there are so many different kinds of surveyors, some of whom have expertise which their counterparts in other countries perceive as belonging to another kind of surveyor or other professionals or which are not practised at all. The issue of "corresponding professions" i.e. a profession in another country which includes a substantial number of the professional activities comprised in the profession in the host country, is a major problem. Harmonisation has another inherent problem in that it is based only on the nature of the pre-qualification professional education and training as at one point in time. Thus, any changes to the pre-qualification process proposed subsequent to the initial agreement must also be the subject of negotiation.

Certification involves an additional layer of education and administration and, as with reciprocity agreements, applies only to those countries who are part of the certification process and for those work opportunities, where certification is required by the employers. There is a danger, however, that such specific uses of certification will result in a proliferation (and therefore a confusion) of certificates.

However, the principle which underpins mutual recognition (which, in the EU has imposed by legislation, and is directed at all professions for which a sectoral directive does not exist) is attractive. It does not reflect any particular requirements or specific needs of any particular group. The time-scale required for its implementation within the EU was, inevitably, short and its implementation has been hampered by some very major problems, some of which are inherent in the whole principle of imposing free movement of professionals using a legislative device rather than by agreement at professional level and some of which are less technical in nature. The EU is currently working to remove these.

The analysis of the above three possible solutions highlight some important issues for any system designed to achieve the global surveyor:

- there should be a recognised need for the process to occur. In the case of reciprocity agreements, members of the surveying organisations lobbied for their implementation; in the case of the EU's mutual recognition directive, the drive came from the European

Commission; the need for surveyors to respond to the increasingly international marketplace has already been demonstrated;

- dialogue and understanding of professional issues are vital. In the case of harmonisation, negotiation took a long time, but the range of issues to be agreed between the (then) twelve EU countries was vast. In the case of reciprocity agreements, confidence in the practice and procedures of other professional organisations could only be achieved through efficient and effective communication;
- despite the best of intentions, despite the force of law behind the process, problems can remain, unless all of the parties involved have mutual trust and a thorough understanding of each other and their respective practices and procedures.

If the free movement of professionals world-wide is to be achieved efficiently and effectively, I suggest that, based on the experiences outlined above, the process to be adopted is the mutual recognition of professional qualifications. This should be undertaken at the level of professional institutions and not be introduced with the force of government, and the whole process should be underpinned by effective and efficient communication between organisations which recognise, both the areas of professional activities undertaken by their members and the quality of the output of each of these organisations' professional qualifications. Indeed, the WTO is seeking co-operation and involvement with the international professional bodies in professional services (such as FIG) for the establishment of mutual recognition agreements or bi-lateral agreements in order to achieve free trade in professional services (Enemark, 1999).

There is an attraction in developing and extending the principle of mutual recognition of professional qualifications. Mutual recognition allows each country to retain its own kind of professional education and training because it is based, not on the process of achieving professional qualifications, but on the nature and quality of the outcome of that process. Mutual recognition assumes an appropriate process of pre-qualificational education and training and encourages dialogue between professional organisations in each country in order to investigate the nature of the professional activities undertaken, professional qualifications and the details of pre- and post-qualification education and training. It therefore concentrates, not on the process of qualification, but on the outcome of that process.

In other words, it does not matter how individuals become qualified in their own country, the important fact is that they ARE qualified. The secondary issue to investigate in order to achieve free movement is: in what professional areas are they qualified? i.e. what kind of surveyor are they and, therefore, for what kind of professional activities are they qualified?

It is suggested that this concentration, not on the process of qualification, but on the outcome of the process of qualification is one which should be emulated by surveyors in the system which they adopt.

7. CONCLUSIONS

FIG is proof that professional organisations which represent surveyors can work together, can represent the interests of surveyors with international external organisations and ensure efficient and effective communication to the mutual benefit of all. As a result of the work undertaken by the FIG Task Force, FIG now has a policy statement (FIG Publication No. 27) on mutual recognition.

There is an important principle which underlies the principle of mutual recognition, and which, by its adoption of the policy statement, FIG has already embraced, and that is that there is nothing wrong with doing things differently, provided that certain standards, such as the highest quality of service and professionalism, are maintained. It is axiomatic, therefore, that different does not mean inferior or wrong. It is therefore vital to accept that the basis for any free movement of surveyors should be achieved on the basis of the outcome of professional qualifications, rather than on the process of achieving professional qualification.

The EU is refining its implementation of mutual recognition after 13 years of experience. The FIG policy statement was adopted after four years of research, but that it not to say that this is a reason to ignore other experiences and proposals to achieve the free movement of professionals. What is important is that surveyors are able to work anywhere they are needed in the world – our expertise is too important for this not to happen – and that the process of achieving this does not hinder our professional activities. Mutual recognition is certainly capable of achieving this, provided that its principles are embraced and a flexibly and pragmatic system of implementation is introduced.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

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