



Royal College of Nursing
Policy & International
20 Cavendish Square
London
W1G 0RN

Telephone 020 7647 3598
Fax 020 7647 3413
Email international@rcn.org.uk

Background

The European Commission is currently consulting on changes to the 2005 European directive on mutual recognition of qualifications, also called [directive 36](#)¹,

The Commission has now put forward a number of options in a

Qualifications Framework, which has eight levels and instead of measuring inputs, like the directive, measures outcomes. This potentially creates confusion.

The Commission is awaiting the outcome of a study looking at the two systems but in the meantime is asking whether the levels in the directive should be scrapped entirely and member states should make the assessment based on differences and similarities in the training rather than level. This means that qualifications could not be refused recognition purely because there was a big gap in the level of qualification, with potentially greater opportunities for recognition for some migrants. The Commission states that it would also give the individual regulators greater discretion.

The levels do, however, provide some kind of benchmark and it is questionable whether it is realistic for a regulator to identify a realistic adaptation period for a migrant if the differences are so great. The RCN has not yet seen the results of the study or any indication of the number of health professionals impacted by the discrepancy in levels.

If the levels are scrapped the Commission would also like to see greater onus put on

language abilities to practise their profession but this does not mean that member states can systematically language test all applicants at the point of recognition. Although the regulators can require evidence of language competency from individuals if they have cause for concern, the prime responsibility lies with the employers.

The Commission is proposing two options to strengthen the current arrangements in recognition of the specific risks relating to professionals who come into direct contact with patients. One is to strengthen the wordi

•

the professions in tackling more complex health needs. These are two issues which the RCN supported in its initial consultation response.

The Commission is keen to ensure that it is notified in good time about new diplomas for health professionals which meet the automatic recognition requirements, so that graduates can take advantage of free movement. They also want a clearer process of accrediting new diplomas to ensure they do meet the minimum standards in the directive.