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Abstract

On 18 May 2015 the five Ministers in charge of Higher Education in Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg agreed on a Benelux Decision on the mutual automatic generic recognition of higher education degrees in the Benelux. Its full name pays tribute to the personal contribution to its realisation by the late First Governmental Counsellor, Germain Dondelinger, who was the representative of Luxembourg in the initial negotiations. The Decision guarantees the legal right to each citizen to automatic degree recognition of any officially recognised bachelor's or master's degree obtained in the three countries of Benelux. Such degrees will be immediately recognized as of equivalent – bachelor or master – level, without mediation of any recognition procedure in the entire Benelux territory. This new legal instrument builds on earlier partial bilateral agreements that have now been expanded to a collective arrangement for the Benelux region as a whole. It can therefore be considered as the formal expression of the mutual trust of the Benelux authorities in each other's higher education systems and, in particular, in the quality assurance mechanisms underpinning them. De-spite the limitation to generic and academic recognition, it remains the first concrete regional achievement, both in the European Union and the entire European Higher Education Area, to the common goal of automatic international recognition of degrees and qualifications. For the Benelux

countries this decision is, however, only a first step towards a genuine Benelux Higher Education Area, for which further obstacles will have to be cleared in the near future. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)