

3.1. RECOGNITION OF STUDENTS' LEARNING OUTCOMES IN THE CONTEXT OF TRANSNATIONAL MOBILITY

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This section examines the recognition of learning outcomes in the context of transnational mobility, with particular attention to Ukrainian children affected by forced migration. The evolution from input-based to outcome-based approaches has shifted the focus toward competencies, actual achievements, and learner-centred pathways, ensuring comparability across educational systems. Competency-based frameworks, including EQF, ECTS, micro-credentials, and digital credentials, provide transparency, support credit transfer, and facilitate validation of formal, non-formal, and informal learning. International conventions, such as the Lisbon Recognition Convention, combined with Ukrainian legislation, establish principles of presumption of recognition, enabling access even when formal documentation is incomplete. Forced mobility highlights the need for flexible, individualized approaches, including diagnostic assessment, portfolio evaluation, and recognition of prior learning, which allow learners to integrate diverse educational experiences into coherent trajectories. Digital tools enhance verification, portability, and trust in recognized achievements. Effective recognition thus forms a multidimensional ecosystem linking quality assurance, policy, technology, and learner-centred pedagogy, supporting educational continuity, mobility, and sustainable development in vocational and professional pre-higher education contexts.

Keywords: *transnational mobility, recognition of learning outcomes, children/youth migrants from Ukraine, educational integration*

In the context of the globalization of the educational space and the intensification of transnational mobility, the concept of recognition of learning outcomes has evolved from a purely technical procedure into a fundamental principle ensuring the continuity of education. The contemporary paradigm, embedded in the documents of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), conceptualizes learning outcomes as clear statements describing what a learner is expected to know, understand, and be able to do upon completion of an educational process (Lokshyna et al., 2025, p. 11). In contrast to the traditional input-oriented approach – focused on indicators such as the number of instructional hours and course titles – modern framework approaches emphasize outputs, thereby enabling the mitigation of institutional and national disparities in the structure of educational programmes (European Commission, 2020, p. 7).

The competency-based approach constitutes the foundation for ensuring the comparability of educational outcomes. It enables the description of learners' complex cognitive and practical achievements through a system of general and specific competencies aligned with national and sectoral qualifications frameworks. As researchers note, the learning outcomes-based approach establishes a "common language" across different educational systems, which is critically important for professional pre-higher and vocational education (Bohlinger, 2017). Consequently, this makes it possible to move from the formal confirmation of diploma equivalence to the substantive recognition of individuals' actual achievements.

International recognition practices are grounded in four key pillars: transparency, trust, comparability, and fairness. Transparency is ensured through the detailed description of educational programmes and the use of instruments such as the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). Trust between institutions does not emerge automatically but develops as a result of the sustained functioning of quality assurance systems. Fairness implies that any qualification or period of study obtained in one country should be recognized in another unless substantial differences can be demonstrated. These principles are embedded in the Lisbon Recognition Convention, which remains a key legal instrument in the field of academic mobility (Shah et al., 2016, pp. 2, 13–14).

The role of internal and external quality assurance in recognition procedures is of particular importance. Without a reliable quality monitoring system, learning outcomes lose their validity in the eyes of international partners and employers. Quality assurance acts as a guarantee that the declared competencies have indeed been developed by the learner and that the assessment procedure was objective (Hou et al., 2016). In the context of transnational mobility, the accreditation of educational programmes in accordance with international standards (ESG, Environmental, Social, Governance) becomes a basis for the automatic or simplified recognition of learning outcomes (Kohler, 2003).

Theoretical justification of recognition encompasses an understanding of flexible learning pathways. In the context of contemporary challenges such as digitalization and forced migration, recognition mechanisms must cover not only formal but also non-formal and informal education. This requires the implementation of micro-credentials and digital certificates, which enable the decomposition of large qualifications into discrete modules subject to rapid verification (Chakroun & Keevy, 2018, pp. 10, 19).

The integration of professional pre-higher education into the international context requires educational institutions to rethink the methodology for designing educational programmes. It is necessary to move away from rigid content replication toward the flexible modelling of learning outcomes that correspond to the demands of the international labour market (Cedefop, 2025d, p. 18). Effective recognition of learning

outcomes in a transnational dimension is impossible without synergy between academic standards and economic needs, which is achieved through the involvement of stakeholders in the evaluation of education quality (Martínez-Rojas, 2025, pp. 3–5).

Thus, the theoretical and conceptual foundations of recognition are grounded in the transition to student-centred learning, where the primary object of assessment is not the process but the specific outcome. This creates conditions for the unhindered mobility of human capital, enhances graduates' competitiveness, and promotes the internationalization of the educational space (Knight, 2021, p. 82). In this context, quality assurance performs the function of a filter that guarantees academic integrity and the alignment of acquired knowledge with established standards on a global scale (Coates et al., 2025).

The modern architecture of the legal regulation of learning outcomes recognition is shaped at the intersection of international conventions, European policies, and national legislation, aiming to ensure the continuity of educational pathways and the mobility of learners. The key legal foundation at the European level remains the Lisbon Recognition Convention, ratified by Ukraine, which enshrines the principle of the presumption of recognition: a qualification should be recognized unless a substantial difference is demonstrated (Council of Europe, 1997, p. 6). Complementing this approach is the Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education, which extends the logic of mutual recognition to the global educational space (UNESCO, 2019).

For vocational, professional pre-higher, and higher education, the key instrument is the European Qualifications Framework, which functions as a “translation grid” between national qualifications systems and ensures the comparability of learning outcomes through level descriptors (European Commission, 2018). The principles of accumulation and transfer of learning outcomes are embedded in the practice of ECTS and in approaches derived from ECVET, which after 2020 have been integrated into broader outcome-based instruments for vocational education. The further development of this logic is reflected in the Council Recommendation on Micro-credentials, which legitimizes micro-credentials as a tool for flexible mobility, continuous professional development, and the individualization of educational pathways (Council of the European Union, 2022a).

The national regulatory framework of Ukraine demonstrates a consistent harmonization with European approaches to the recognition of learning outcomes. The foundational act is the Law of Ukraine “On Education” (2017), which enshrines learners' right to recognition of learning outcomes acquired through formal, non-formal, and informal education. For the sector of professional pre-higher education, the key legislation is the Law of Ukraine “On Professional Pre-Higher Education” (2019), while in the field of vocational education, the provisions of the Law of Ukraine “On Vocational

Education” (2025c) apply. An important procedural mechanism is the Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine No. 130, which establishes the procedure for recognizing in higher and professional pre-higher education the learning outcomes acquired through non-formal and/or informal education and allows for the integration of acquired competencies into educational programs (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2022a).

The crisis conditions of recent years (the COVID-19 pandemic and the full-scale war) have highlighted the need for simplified and flexible procedures for the recognition of learning outcomes. In this context, advisory acts are of particular importance, including Resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 734 and No. 871, which regulate approaches to the accreditation of learning outcomes obtained in foreign educational institutions and in occupied territories, and establish the practice of recognition in the absence of a complete set of documents through competency assessment procedures (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2025a; 2025b). Furthermore, in February 2025, amendments were made to the Law of Ukraine “On Complete General Secondary Education” (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2020b), Article 6, Paragraph 6, which opened the possibility for the official recognition of learning outcomes of children acquired abroad, including in Saturday and Sunday schools, educational centers, and similar institutions. This approach aligns with the provisions of Article VII of the Lisbon Recognition Convention regarding the recognition of qualifications of refugees and displaced persons (Council of Europe, 1997, p. 9).

At the institutional level, the implementation of regulatory provisions is linked to the development of internal policies on academic mobility, credit transfer regulations, and procedures for validating learning outcomes. The use of European Higher Education Area instruments – such as the Learning Agreement and the Diploma Supplement – ensures transparency and automation of credit transfer procedures (European Commission, 2025b). In professional pre-higher education institutions, the application of credit-modular logic facilitates the standardization of learning outcome descriptions, whereas in vocational education, the key challenge remains aligning modular learning outcomes with professional standards and employer needs (Kalenskyi et al., 2018, pp. 245–246).

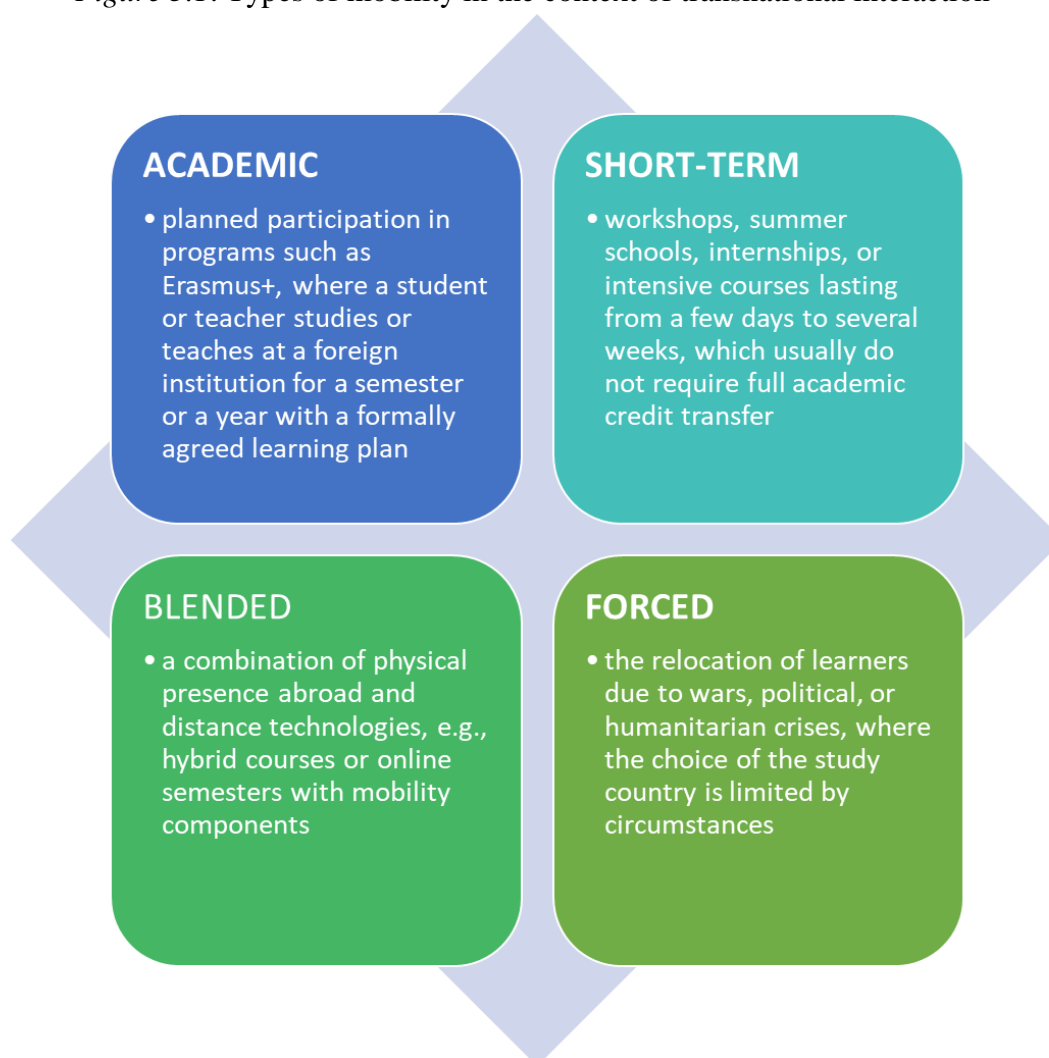
The national qualifications framework, approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 1341 (National Qualifications Framework, as updated in 2020), plays a systemic role in ensuring the comparability of qualifications. It aligns the Ukrainian qualifications system with the EQF and provides a basis for the recognition of learning outcomes in the context of both domestic and international mobility (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2011a).

The effectiveness of recognition mechanisms is directly linked to the digital transformation of the educational infrastructure. The use of digital achievement documentation services, in particular Europass (2026), as well as the integration of

national educational registries (notably the EDEBO system) with European systems, ensures data verification and simplifies procedures for academic and professional recognition. Current education policy shows a trend toward shifting from a formal-documentary approach to a competency-based approach, which prioritizes actual learning outcomes, their evidence, and the possibility of independent validation.

Educational mobility in the modern world is no longer exclusively a voluntary tool of academic exchange, having evolved into a complex, multi-directional phenomenon. In the context of transnational interaction, several key types of mobility are distinguished (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1. Types of mobility in the context of transnational interaction



Forced mobility has become a defining issue for Ukraine, where the mass displacement of learners abroad has highlighted the need for the immediate recognition of learning outcomes acquired in different jurisdictions. Each type of mobility requires specific approaches to the verification of learning outcomes, ranging from standard learning agreements to complex assessment and validation procedures.

One of the main barriers to seamless recognition is the issue of program comparability. Differences often arise in the content of modules and assessment methods. Divergent approaches to credit allocation (for example, discrepancies between national contact hours and ECTS) create situations where formally similar courses exhibit significant differences in achieved learning outcomes. This requires institutions to shift from “subject-based” comparisons to the evaluation of outcomes at the level of final competencies, which is a considerably more flexible mechanism in a transnational context (Teichler, 2017, pp. 3–10).

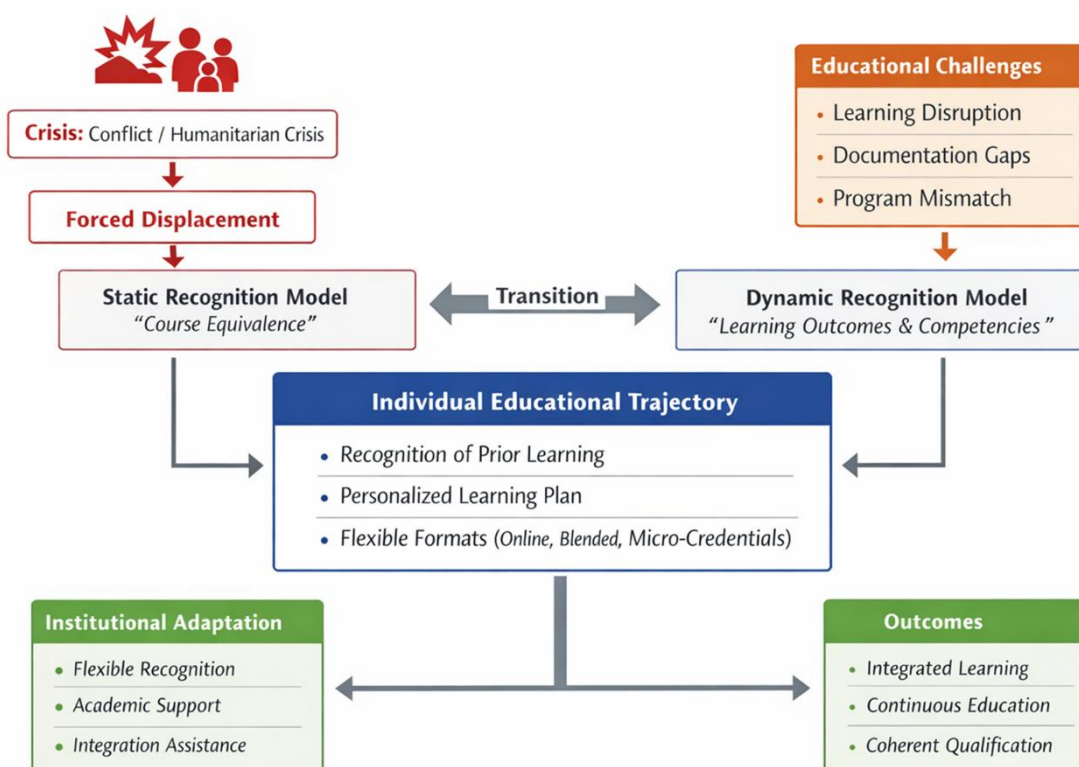
The digitalization of documentation is becoming a key facilitator of this process. The implementation of digital diplomas, micro-credentials, and blockchain technologies for certificate verification minimizes the risk of forgery and accelerates recognition procedures. The use of Europass Digital Credentials tools allows learners to accumulate verified achievements in a single digital profile, which is comprehensible to employers and educational institutions worldwide (European Commission, 2021). This is particularly important in vocational education, where the rapid verification of a specific skill can be more valuable than a full qualification.

Finally, partner networks and inter-institutional collaboration play a decisive role in ensuring the quality of mobility. Trust, which underlies recognition, is built on long-term relationships between educational institutions. The creation of consortia and the signing of bilateral memoranda allow institutions to pre-agree on quality standards, making the recognition of learning outcomes almost automatic for mobility participants. In such networks, institutions act not as competitors but as partners, jointly shaping an educational space where the interests of learners and their right to continuous education are prioritized. Thus, mobility functions not merely as physical relocation, but as a catalyst for the modernization of quality assurance procedures and the internationalization of educational programs (Beelen & Jones, 2015, pp. 62–63, 70).

Forced transnational mobility caused by armed conflicts or other crises requires a shift from static recognition models to dynamic tools that focus on the individualization of the educational process. The construction of individualized educational pathways becomes a foundational model, allowing learners to integrate learning outcomes acquired

in different institutions and countries into a coherent qualification. In situations of forced displacement, an individual pathway ceases to be merely a “course selection” and becomes a survival mechanism within the educational space, where the receiving institution must adapt its requirements to the learner’s existing body of knowledge (Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2. Individual educational trajectory in context of forced transnational mobility



One of the most effective tools for validating knowledge under such conditions is a portfolio of learning outcomes. It serves as an alternative to missing official documents, allowing learners to present not only formal grades but also examples of work, projects, and descriptions of acquired practical experience. The portfolio (Evidence of Learning) enables the assessment of “soft skills” and non-formal education, which often remain outside the scope of traditional academic transcripts (Cedefop, 2022, pp. 88–90). For vocational and professional pre-higher education institutions, this tool is indispensable when evaluating practical training, where actual skills take precedence over theoretical hours.

Digitalization has significantly transformed verification procedures through digital educational records and digital badges. Digital badges are digital indicators of achievements that contain embedded metadata about who issued the certificate, for which specific outcomes, and by what assessment methods. This ensures a high level of transparency and protection against forgery. Moreover, digital records allow a large educational program to be “fragmented” into smaller, verified parts, which is especially important during short-term mobility periods. Alongside digital records, the concept of micro-credentials is developing. They serve as a tool for flexible recognition, allowing learners to obtain official validation of learning outcomes for a single module or short course. Micro-credentials are ideally suited for conditions of forced mobility, as they enable the rapid validation of relevant skills and their integration into the labor market of the host country or their crediting as part of the main program upon return (Hurzhii et al., 2025a, pp. 32–35).

The effectiveness of all the aforementioned tools depends on mechanisms of mutual recognition between educational institutions in different countries. The creation of transnational trust networks allows institutions to delegate part of the assessment authority to one another. “Automatic recognition” models are based on shared quality standards and regular monitoring of learning outcomes (Nuffic, 2020, pp. 5–7). In vocational and professional pre-higher education, such mechanisms are often implemented through sectoral consortia, where employers and educational institutions jointly recognize the value of specific learning modules regardless of the country of origin (Radkevych et al., 2023a, p. 195). Thus, the combination of technological solutions and inter-institutional trust forms a new recognition ecosystem focused on the continuous development of individuals in the face of global challenges.