IFLA STRATEGY FOR INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION OF PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS: INITIAL PHASE

AGENDA ITEM No.: N/A
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Executive Summary
The aim of this document is to present the first ideas regarding the international professional recognition of landscape architects, in order to analyse current situation of the free movement of professionals and professional recognition in this circumstance within and across IFLA Regions, evaluate needs in response to the increasing global markets and to open discussion on different conceptions of IFLA’s role in professional recognition across the NA. The goal of this, initial phase, is to set the IFLA strategy towards Recognition of Professional Qualifications of Landscape Architects, as a respond to the challenges of the contemporary society, characterised by the higher demands for free movement.

Paths to Professional Recognition of professional qualifications
We believe IFLA should be able, in time to provide the standards, training, enhance capacity building, support and professional qualifications recognition to our members, collective or individual, as a complete set of articulated services.

The main objective of this proposal is to define IFLA strategy professional recognition. Having in mind current constrains related to IFLA’s administrative and financial capacities, the major question is to assess the benefits and possible directions of eventual engagement, both for IFLA, IFLA regions and IFLA individual members. The proposal implies evaluation of possible approaches and scopes of engagement.
The proposition should address formal administrative considerations, having in mind different levels of the development of the profession across member countries, their legislative frameworks and preconditions for the professional qualification process (such as appropriate regulation of the profession in various member countries, degree level entrees, adaptation mechanism in the case of deficiencies between parties, etc.). Finally, in order to identify a clear long-term strategy towards professional recognition, this phase of the project could note possible directions of IFLA’s role, which may advance in several directions.

We identify several paths to professional recognition in this initial phase that need to be discussed, weighted and considered in order to design IFLA’s future strategy and how it could be developed.

We will shortly present:

1. IFLA policy and service to Mutual recognition of membership in national associations by bilateral agreements between NA. (service to IFLA members)
2. IFLA policy and service to assist the individual migration of professionally qualified landscape architects as member in another national association. (service to individuals)
3. IFLA would coordinate and recognize existing accreditation bodies (i.e. CLARB) and NA already performing excellent individual professional recognition as Landscape Architect (title, professional activity and rights) = e.g. Landscape Architects certified by CLARB. (service to IFLA members)
4. IFLA would establish and lead professional recognition /accreditation process for individuals by offering a procedure to award Individual Professional international excellence. This means IFLA gives the title IFLA certified Landscape Architect which has no legal status. (service to individuals)

The listed approaches may be combined, articulated through the phases, or even geographically, depending of the interests and needs.
1.- Bilateral Mutual recognition

Mutual recognition of professional qualifications is an administrative instrument created to allow individuals seeking to work in another country to acquire the same title as that held by their colleagues who have qualified in that country, without having to requalify. This process enables free or easier movement of professionals across national borders or, in some cases, regional ones, in order to practice their occupation or provide services abroad.

Mutual recognition agreements are one of the most obvious responses to the increasingly global markets for professional services. Without it, professionals looking to practice in different countries ordinarily need to go through the rather complex process of validation of their educational and professional competencies. Mutual recognition agreements significantly simplify this process, applying the prearranged mechanisms which lead (depending on the hosting country legislation) to more or less automatic appreciation of competences. Consequently, it is often argued that the mutual recognition of professional qualifications is the best process to be adopted if the free movement of professionals is to be achieved efficiently and effectively.

Mechanisms of the mutual professional recognition significantly differ in relation to the various professions and geographically, as we may face initiatives of specific professional bodies or certain regional initiatives. European Union introduced Recognition of Professional Qualifications (Directive 2005/36/EC), with different routes to mutual recognition such as “Automatic recognition” for professions with harmonised minimum training conditions, and recognition on the basis of professional experience, for example. Unfortunately, landscape architecture as a profession does not fall in the professions eligible for Automatic recognition, which makes this matter also relevant to usually more regulated European area. Other existing mechanisms are either on the level of certain professional fields, such is the Sydney Accord, an international mutual recognition agreement for qualifications in the fields of engineering technology, or within of scope of wider, comprehensive regional agreements such as North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

To provide a framework for IFLA members - national associations wishing to establish mutual recognition agreements with other national associations. Bilateral mutual recognition agreements are perceived as interim devices until a global system of mutual recognition (GATS, 1995);

IFLA haven’t been engaged in the initiatives for the recognition of professional qualification, at least not systematically, with clear long-term strategy. However, there are some initiatives which may be seen as related and beneficial for the mutual professional qualification’s recognition, such as the Survey of Professional Requirements and Education. We understand this project to be the only and main source of information at an international level that should
enable IFLA to identify pairs or groups of countries with similar professional qualifications procedures. The understanding of the diversity and taxonomy situations should thus place IFLA as the body responsible to giving advice, templates and service to NA. The main objective at this stage would be to analyse PREP survey results in order to assess the feasibility of IFLA’s new role in the professional qualifications recognition process, as well as forms and scope of appropriate engagement.

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<th>THREATS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Easy to set up and implement, cost efficient.</td>
<td>1 to 1 approach, not global. Some countries may want many other none...</td>
<td>Could lead to mutual professional accreditation through recognition in similar contexts</td>
<td>May lead to professionals mobilities by clusters of NAs</td>
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<td>Clear known methodology&gt; PREP Analysis, taxonomy and providing a TEMPLATE</td>
<td>Restrictive, only targets professional in NA willing to migrate</td>
<td>Could be used strategically for capacity building between associations to benefit several countries lack title/practice acts or do not recognize landscape architecture as an independent profession.</td>
<td>Depends only on the member needs and willingness for cooperation in establishment of mutual professional recognition mechanisms</td>
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<td>The concept of expanding the body of knowledge as it relates to professional practice and increased professionalism need to be at the core of the proposal.</td>
<td>Question how to approach those associations which does not have any professional qualification standards and / or procedures?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Could lead to professional mobilities by clusters of NAs</td>
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<td>Depends only on the number of with similar professional qualifications procedures, which might be limited (PREP will answer this question)</td>
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2.- Assistance to individual migration

For the time being, there is very limited number of initiatives on mutual recognition of professional qualifications in the field of landscape architecture. In the majority of cases, the requests are placed in front of national associations individually, in a rather unsystematic manner which calls for assessments of each case separately. The difficulty is also the fact that many national associations are not responsible for awarding process of the professional qualifications, and even more that some countries do not have regulated mechanisms for the professional qualification or the profession is not regulated at all. Moreover, parties responsible for awarding the professional qualifications or award practising licenses may differ from country to country.

If we agree this individual request are more and more frequently placed in front of national associations, IFLA could give service to its NA members by providing guidance and support to this individual migration processes.

The most paradigmatic case study could be recognised in IFLA Europe’s Project on the Professional Movement Between Associations, with the ambition to establish a process to assist professional migration for IFLA EU’s National Associations Members without interfering with the professional rules in each country, or with each National Association membership requirements.

The project at world level could build on the European region model, using PREP to verify the preconditions. The regional and sub regionals approach as defined in our membership tables could be advisable, in order to better build cooperation within our own IFLA structure according to Constitution.

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<td>Pilot experience in EU REGION</td>
<td>Only certain individual gets benefit out of it, not member associations or non-associated Land Arch around the world.</td>
<td>Could lead to individual mutual professional accreditation through recognition in similar contexts</td>
<td>May lead to professionals mobilities by clusters of NAs</td>
</tr>
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<td>Clear known methodology&gt; PREP Analysis, taxonomy and providing a FORM To be EVALUATED</td>
<td>Restrictive approach to the profession, individual solution tackles the lack of common ground between NA</td>
<td>Recognize NA as equals, by pairs.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The concept of expanding the body of knowledge as it relates to professional need to be at the core of the proposal.</td>
<td>It generates cost and no income</td>
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3. IFLA recognition of accreditations bodies
This option may explore the options for IFLA to would coordinate and “recognize” officially several existing accreditation bodies (i.e. CLARB) and NA already performing excellent individual professional recognition. In this strategy the individual recognition would be outsourced to other bodies with economical and human force to build on a Global International Professional recognition. The main concern would be thus to build up on the state of the art of the existing accreditation’s & recognition methodologies and getting to a common understanding of which would be IFLA required STANDARDS for IFLA to fully accept this recognition.
This process could be laborious and needs complicity and cooperation of the main existing accreditations bodies, national chambers and NA as the individual accreditations might happened through very diverse paths and agencies around the world.
This approach should consist on:
- define the State of Art of global accreditation bodies and their procedures
- draft a document of STANDARD’s to be approved by its regions and NA
- reaching an agreement with the accreditation bodies to work/adapt to IFLA standards for accreditation.

The formalization of the project should be arranged by bilateral MoU should be the best way to consolidate IFLA as the provider of those Standards and umbrella organizations coordinating different accreditation & recognition systems.

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<td>Global approach to professional recognition.</td>
<td>IFLA has representative control but not effective one to the professions</td>
<td>In long term could define a path to accreditation internationally</td>
<td>If IFLA does not lead it, bodies might accredit on their own.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Effective lobby for the profession TOP/DOWN</td>
<td>Could we lose quality or control over which kind of quality professionals we want? potential threat.</td>
<td>Frameworks IFLA as a brand over Chambers /NA and all bodies as leader of the project</td>
<td>Once international market is reached, accreditations bodies might stop paying to IFLA?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outsourcing this service should generate incomes to IFLA as it helps expands the market for accreditation bodies though recognition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>May lead to professionals to trust outsources accreditation bodies over IFLA and its members</td>
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<td>Existence of very good national mechanisms among</td>
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some of the NA
4. **Professional recognition for individuals by international excellence.**

IFLA could establish and lead professional recognition /accreditation process for individuals by offering a procedure to award Individual Professional international excellence.

In accordance to the data obtained through the PREP Survey tool, the main objective of this path to Professional recognition would be to set up a system and process for an individual professional accreditation.

This approach should consist on:

- Defining the policy by creating a set of criteria’s /standards
- Define and design the process of accreditation of professional individuals
- Create an online tool with webform to achieve and grade the applicant professional portfolio

Create a pool of Examiners that would peer review the candidate and his projects in the IT tool.

This accreditation could be done by the NGO IFLA and thus has no legal status but in reality, it will influence the diver’s professional’s situation (with an open scope of our profession) across the world if the brand is perceived and accepted by our Members unanimously. It will help that LA professionals are accepted in different countries and it will improve the mobility.

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<td>Global approach to professional recognition.</td>
<td>Service to INDIVIDUALS and weak NA</td>
<td>IFLA EU would be interested in leading a pilot EUMLA as in Europe CTF would lead to PQD and thus to accreditation in the EU countries.</td>
<td>Requires of IFLA members though our WC to accept our Recognition as unique and only precondition to be a member of the any NA.</td>
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<td>Equal per all, does not depend on NA, just on personal CV and Portfolio.</td>
<td>IFLA can award recognition as quality prove but has no legal status</td>
<td>It can easily be combined with other approaches, once ste criteria is set</td>
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<td>Based on quality of the candidate, not background.</td>
<td>IFLA recognition would be based on the power of the brand building</td>
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<td>The recognition as service should generate incomes to IFLA</td>
<td>It would cost many to build a tool to interact with the applicants</td>
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<td>Comprehensive approach to the profession including related fields not recognized by the NA of the country. Landscape Planner, Landscape manager,</td>
<td>Approach requires defining IFLA Standards / assessment criteria</td>
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**STRENGTH**

- Global approach to professional recognition.
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- Based on quality of the candidate, not background.
- The recognition as service should generate incomes to IFLA.
- Comprehensive approach to the profession including related fields not recognized by the NA of the country.

**WEAKNESSES**

- Service to INDIVIDUALS and weak NA.
- IFLA can award recognition as quality prove but has no legal status.
- IFLA recognition would be based on the power of the brand building.
- It would cost many to build a tool to interact with the applicants.
- Approach requires defining IFLA Standards / assessment criteria.

**OPPORTUNITIES**

- IFLA EU would be interested in leading a pilot EUMLA as in Europe CTF would lead to PQD and thus to accreditation in the EU countries.
- It can easily be combined with other approaches, once ste criteria is set.

**THREATS**

- Requires of IFLA members though our WC to accept our Recognition as unique and only precondition to be a member of the any NA.
- This should be implemented via modification of Constitution or maybe Code of Ethics ratification.
Main assumptions and preconditions in the process of mutual professional qualification recognition

- The applicant is fully qualified professional in the home country; (Required in path 1,2)
- Applicant competence to work in another country (the host country) needs to be assessed (Required in path 2,3,4)
- Formally established profession exists in the hosting country (Required in path 1,2)
- Representative professional organization exists in the host country; (Required in path 1,2)
- There is a political will, needed to support the process;
- Professional organization in the host country does not challenge the status and professional integrity of the applicant. Its role is to assess the professional status of the applicant against the standards for the home country, including that the individual is prepared to follow professional codes ethics, common for the home country. (Required in path 2)
- The standards against professional competence of the applicant who should be assessed, are the same required for a newly qualified professional in the host country.

Overall methodology

The initial phase of the IFLA strategy towards recognition of professional qualifications will include several separate steps, with a goal to acquire better understanding of the existing mechanisms of the professional qualification recognition and the needs of the landscape architecture at this moment. Findings of the initial phase should be based on the results of PREP SURVEY and could be complemented with the following:

a) Survey of existing models of mutual professional qualifications recognition, currently in use by various international bodies and other professional organizations.

b) Assessment of the current condition in IFLA member countries based on PREP results:
   - How landscape architects in different countries acquire their professional qualifications?
   - What are the common ways of the assessment of their professional competences?
   - Are there any developed mechanisms of mutual professional recognition in IFLA member countries? How the national associations deal with the requests to practice in their countries? How the information is transferred from one party to another?
This step does not imply comprehensive survey, as it is at this stage perceived more as gathering the existing information and experiences in order to overview the common situation.

c) Outline the information base needed for the professional recognition, for individual members:
   - Qualification requirements (defined to include education, examination, practical training, experience, language skills, etc.);
   - Qualification procedures (which imply the opportunity for obtaining the formal recognition);
   - Adaptation mechanisms.

Again, this step foresees gathering information of existing practices, and not the comprehensive survey.

**Long-term strategy related to IFLA Policies**

While the beforementioned project evolves and produces results throughout the PREP Survey, 3 different initiatives need to be undertaken in parallel to better harmonize a long-term strategy for the professional recognition.

1) **Global Definition of Profession of Landscape Architects Revision**
   IFLA has agreed in 2018 WC to engage on a revision of the professional definition over the next 4 years throughout its task force in cooperation with ISCO / ILO – International Labour Organization
   The diversity of subledgers among our NA members, would advise to broaden the scope of the professions to then recognize internally within our organizations as those professionals’ profiles are not gathered under other NGO and the definition of the profession is very heterogenous around the world. (i.e. Landscape Planners, Landscape Managers, Landscape Engineers). We aim to embrace:

   **ISCO 08 – International Standard Classification of Occupations (ILO 2012):**
   - 216 Architects, Planners, Surveyors and Designers
   - 2161 Building Architects
   - 2162 Landscape Architects
   - 2163 Product and Garment Designers
   - 2164 Town and Traffic Planners
   - Topographers and Surveyors
   - Graphic and Multimedia Designers
2) While we prepare a new policy to establish a baseline for global professional standards, we will draft a Code of Professional Conduct / Code of Ethics for individuals that includes an ethical common ground for all LA professionals. In this document, aiming to be ratified by all 5 regions and then by all NA associations, the concept of Individual / Mutual Recognition should be included and initially developed and thus accepted when ratified.

3) Acknowledging the link between educational accreditation and professional recognition, we should work at IFLA level (EXCO and Chairs) to define an overall framework integrating a future accreditation system (International School Recognition Panel - WG) with a future International recognition system. We could anticipate that in time, with harmonized educational criteria, a form of Long-Life learning for professionals could be generated or some form of an IFLA Examination in panel for Professional Practice could be considered long term.

**Action Plan related to this document**

We would therefore advice to proceed as follows:

1) Open a 2-month time to comment on this document comment/correct/ improve
2) With the first results of the PREP SURVEY we could begin to anticipate the taxonomy of situations in which NA would face professional recognition mechanisms according to their overall characteristics. We could form categorization of the existing policies based on similarities.
3) Task force group in ILO should be create and set to work with this document as background knowledge to guide and open door to a broader dimension of the profession’s definition.
4) Code of Ethics Task force should consider and draft a conceptual framework to allow and enhance individual and professional recognition.
5) As for the IFLA long-term strategy on professional qualifications recognition the strategy needs to be based on the acceptability of existing models, and the organization and member’s interests and real needs. A light monkey Survey could be possible to have feedback on the acceptance of the difference 4 Paths mentioned in the proposal. Eventually, the survey among the IFLA members could be beneficial for the estimation of the interest on the recognition of professional qualifications.
6) FBS and treasurer should be at last included as last action of the plan to better define the resources needed for each one of the 4 Paths and then assess on their cost-effective future. This would imply eventual costs, manpower, cooperation or alliances with other organizations, etc and of course lucrative ness for the organization as possible incomes.
Expected Results

Project should create clear standpoint of IFLA’s role in the professional recognition, with the defined strategy and actions according to the variety of Paths to be followed. Project is directed towards the development of membership services, with expected raise of IFLA visibility and eventual network increase. In the long term, assistance on recognition of professional qualifications may be seen as a business opportunity. As the concern is that the proposed process is too long IFLA could co-pilot a number of these options with help of some willing NA. With the help of a large NA first pilot test could be done on the different 4 paths above defined in order to carry out a process for professional recognition, support it, monitor it and build on the results.

Useful resources


First draft: A. Tutundzic, 9 April 2018
Second draft: M. Cervera, 13 March 2019