HEI'25
Higher Education Intervention 2025

ORCA
organizata për ritjen e cilësisë në arsim



NATIONAL ACADEMIC RECOGNITION INFORMATION CENTRE MONITORING REPORT

JANUARY – DECEMBER 2022

Publisher:
ORCA – the Organization for Improving the Quality of Education
orca-ks.org
info@orca-ks.org
Henrik Baric, No. 6
Prishtina, 10000, Kosova

Author:
Liridona Ademaj

Prishtina, November 2023

“Our Father, who art in heaven, give us the power to keep our mouths shut when we have nothing to say. And give us the patience to think before we write! Inspire us with a sharp sense of justice to speak not only without bias, but to also act thus! Save us from the traps of grammar, distortions of language and errors of typing. Amen!”

[Faik Konica]

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEFINITIONS 5
ABBREVIATIONS 6
INTRODUCTION 7
RECOGNITION PROCEDURES AND LEGISLATION 8
APPROVAL OF THE REGULATION FOR THE STATE COUNCIL FOR RECOGNITION 9
DECISIONS BY THE NATIONAL ACADEMIC RECOGNITION INFORMATION CENTRE 10
DIPLOMAS WITHOUT A DECISION FOR RECOGNITION 17
VERIFICATION OF KOSOVO DIPLOMAS IN NARIC 18
THE CHALLENGES OF THE NARIC CENTRE 20
- INSUFFICIENT STAFF 20
- ONLINE DATABASE 20
- INTERACTIVE DATABASE 21
- NARIC NOT BEING PART OF THE ENIC NETWORK 21
- APPOINTING A MEMBER WITHOUT A PHD IN THE STATE COUNCIL OF RECOGNITION 21
- SUSPENDED CASES FROM THE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN ALBANIA 22
- LACK OF SPECIAL LAW FOR NARIC 22
- LAWSUITS FOR NON-RECOGNITION OF DIPLOMAS 23
- DOMESTIC DIPLOMAS REMAINING UNVERIFIED 24
- WORK METHODOLOGY OF THE COMMISSION FOR THE VERIFICATION OF REMAINING DIPLOMAS 25
- DIPLOMAS EARNED AT PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES THAT HAVE NOT BEEN VERIFIED THROUGHOUT YEARS 26
- DIPLOMAS EARNED AT PRIVATE COLLEGES THAT HAVE NOT BEEN VERIFIED THROUGHOUT YEARS 27

CONCLUSIONS 28

DEFINITIONS

- **RECOGNITION** – means an official acceptance by the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI), of a diploma obtained outside the country, which confirms the accuracy and validity of the diploma
- **EQUIVALENCE** – means an official acceptance by MESTI of a diploma obtained outside the country, which confirms the accuracy and validity of the diploma and compares it to the level of the diplomas and the respective study field in the country
- **VALIDATION** – validating a diploma proves the equivalence of credits and of the diploma of every certification obtained in any of the accredited institutions in Kosovo, that hold an equivalent accreditation. This service of certifying the diploma aims to ease the recognition of the diplomas and credits obtained in accredited institutions within the country for use abroad.
- **NARIC**– National Academic Recognition and Information Centre - is composed of the Office of the Centre and the State Council for Recognition and offers information on the procedures for the recognition of foreign diplomas and qualifications, and offers information on the higher education and qualifications system in Kosovo when requested by other countries
- **STATE COUNCIL FOR RECOGNITION (SCR)** - is an authority that takes decisions for recognizing/equivalence or not recognizing/equivalence, based on the file of the person making the request and the report prepared by the official of the Centre and in special cases, based on the recommendations of the experts' commission. It is composed of university professors from different study fields.

ABBREVIATIONS

- **MESTI** -Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation in Kosovo
- **NARIC KOSOVA** - National Academic Recognition and Information Centre
- **SCR** - State Council for Recognition
- **MESY** - Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth in Albania
- **Level 5** – Professional higher education
- **BA** - Bachelor of Arts studies
- **BSc** – Bachelor of Sciences studies
- **MA** – Master of Arts studies
- **MSc** – Master of Sciences studies
- **PhD** – Doctorate studies
- **ORCA** – Organization for Improving the Quality of Education

INTRODUCTION

The National Academic Recognition and Information Centre (hereafter NARIC) is one of the key institutions in quality assurance in higher education. All persons who have graduated outside of Kosovo, and want to start working in higher education in Kosovo, in a professorial position, which is also related to accreditation, must first go through the process of recognition of diplomas in NARIC. When we introduce here universities in the region, which have quality problems, NARIC becomes the first guardian against low-quality and potentially fake diplomas, thus protecting higher education.

NARIC Kosova continues to face various challenges during its work processes, for which the Government of the Republic of Kosovo is not working to improve their situation.

A high number of students who have completed or who are still studying and who have problems regarding the recognition of their diplomas, for which a final solution by the Ministry of Education is needed, has been identified.

This report is the result of monitoring the work of the State Council for Recognition (SCR) within the National Recognition and Academic Information Centre (NARIC), for the period January-December of 2022.
ORCA has been present in all the meetings held by the SCR, as well as held continuous meetings with the staff of the Office of the NARIC, together with whom the challenges they continue to face during the implementation of their work have been identified.
This report also includes data about the work of the Commission for the Verification of Diplomas Obtained in Higher Education Institutions in Kosovo, established by the Ministry of Education in November 2021.
ORCA has published reports of the same nature for this institution in March 2022[1], November 2020[2] and February 2020[3].

1 "NARIC Kosova Monitoring Report 3", March 2022, link: https://orca-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/NARIC-Kosova-Monitoring-Report-3.pdf

2 "NARIC Kosova Monitoring Report 2", November 2020, link: https://orca-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/NARIC-Kosova-Monitoring-Report.pdf

3 "NARIC Kosova Monitoring Report", February 2020, link:https://orca-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/RAPORTI-I-MONITORIMIT-T%C3%8B-NARIC-KOSOVA-ENG-02.pdf

RECOGNITION PROCEDURES AND LEGISLATION

The National Academic Recognition and Information Centre (NARIC) currently operates based on the legislation in force as follows:

- *Law on Higher Education in the Republic of Kosovo*[4]
- *Administrative Instruction On Verification Of School Documentation (Public And Private) For Candidates Needs Being Educated Abroad*[5],
- *Administrative Instruction on the Principles and Procedures for the Recognition of Diplomas, Degrees and Qualifications of Higher Professional and University Schools Obtained Outside the Republic of Kosovo*[6].
- *Regulation on the Work of the State Council for Recognition and the Commissions for the Relevant Fields*

The cases of public regional universities and universities in global ranking lists, such as Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), Times Higher Education World University Ranking (THE) and QS World University Ranking, after obtaining confirmation by the country that they are authentic and valid, are approved by the staff of the NARIC Centre, without having to go through the State Council for Recognitions.

The State Council for Recognition, specifically the member of the field of study from which the diploma was obtained, first examines the application for recognition of the diploma, but in case of any ambiguity, the application is discussed with the other members of the council, otherwise, after examination, it is signed by the member of the relevant field and the applicant accepts the decision from NARIC that the diploma has been recognized.

4 Law on Higher Education, link: https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=2761

5 Administrative Instruction (Mest) No. 26/2014 On Verification Of School Documentation (Public And Private) For Candidates Needs Being Educated Abroad, link: https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=10210

6 Administrative Instruction 12/2018 on the Principles and Procedures for the Recognition of Diplomas, Degrees and Qualifications of Higher Professional and University Schools Obtained Outside the Republic of Kosovo, link: https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=15228

NARIC Kosova requests information in the centres of the European Network of Information Centres in the European Region and National Academic Recognition Information Centres in the European Union (ENIC – NARIC), on the status of higher education institutions, the validity of diplomas or certificates, their level according to National/European Qualifications Frameworks, and other extra information needed for recognizing or equivalenting diplomas.

The applications for recognition of qualifications of higher professional schools and universities obtained abroad Kosovo is possible through the website of this centre[7].

Degrees earned abroad must go through the Ministry of Education's recognition process to confirm its accuracy and authenticity, while degrees earned domestically must go through the verification process to prove degree validity and credit equivalency in order to facilitate the acceptance of these diplomas outside Kosovo.

APPROVAL OF THE REGULATION FOR THE STATE COUNCIL FOR RECOGNITION

The State Council for Recognition (SCR), in December 2022, approved the Work Regulation of the State Council for Recognition and Commissions from Professional Fields through which these two types of decision-making bodies within the National Academic Recognition and Information Centre (NARIC) are functioning.

The creation of such a regulation has been made possible through the help of certain experts engaged by the QAINT project funded by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), in consultation with some of the members of SCR and the centre's staff.

7 The website of NARIC Kosova: https://naric-ks.online/

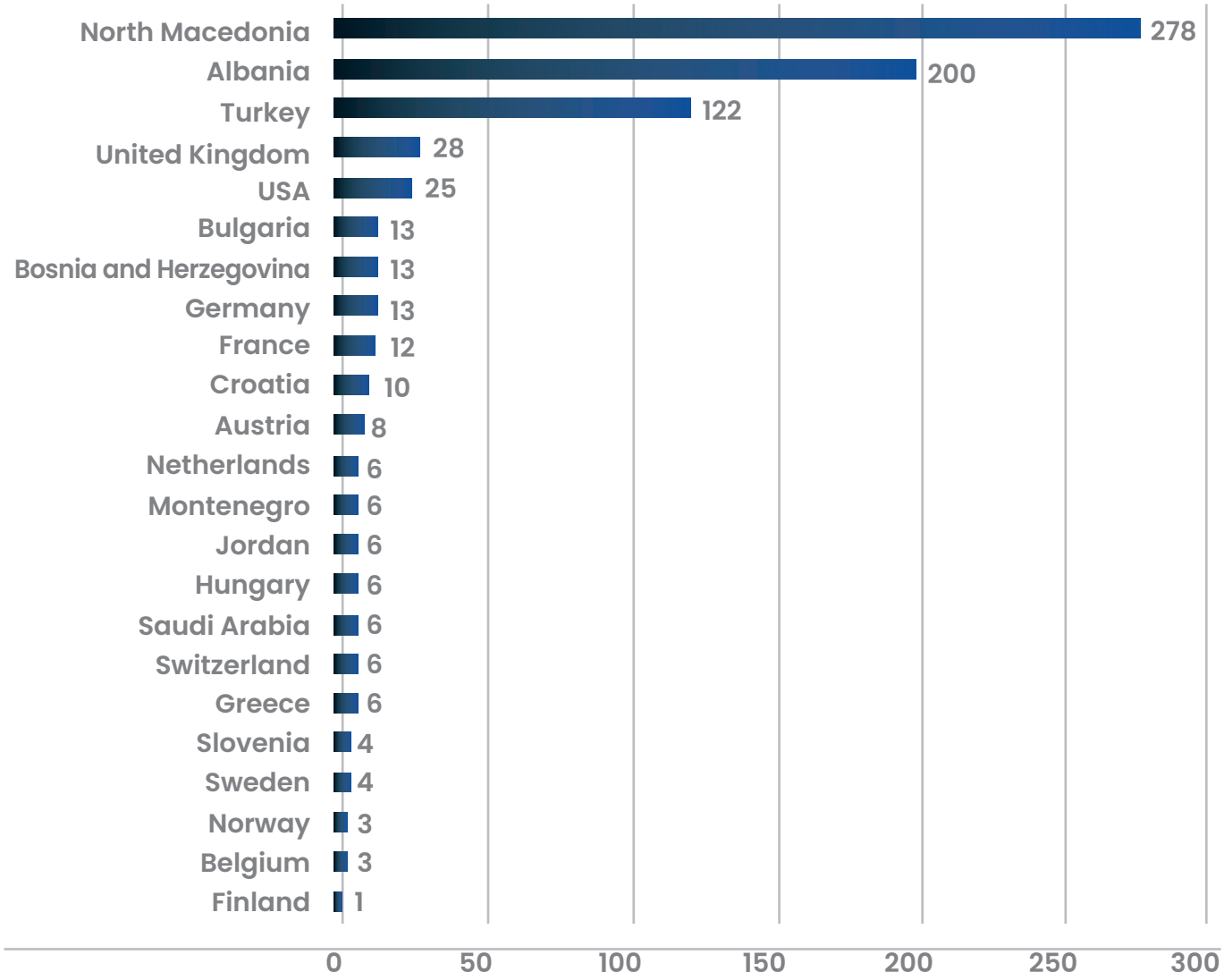
From December 2022, the Council has started working based on this regulation, in addition to the Administrative Instruction 12/2018 on the Principles and Procedures for the Recognition of Diplomas, Degrees and Qualifications of Higher Professional and University Schools Obtained Outside the Republic of Kosovo.

DECISIONS BY THE NATIONAL ACADEMIC RECOGNITION INFORMATION CENTRE

During the January-December period of 2022, a total of 1,132 decisions were made by the State Council for Recognition (SCR) at the National Academic Recognition and Information Centre (NARIC). The decisions are also for the cases that have come as requests during the previous years but that have not been able to receive recognition due to various delays in providing the necessary information for the recognition of diplomas.
Meanwhile, there are 240 diplomas in the process that have not yet been answered by NARIC as a result of the lack of official answers from the institutions where the parties have completed their studies, or from the centres of the respective states.
For comparison, in the January-December period of 2021, a total of 1,095 decisions were made by the National Academic Recognition and Information Centre, while 203 diplomas were in the process, which had not yet received an answer about recognition due to the lack of answers from the institutions where the parties had completed their studies, or from the centres of the respective states.
The number of requests for recognition/equivalence of higher education diplomas was a total of 779 during the year 2022. Diplomas were recognized by different countries, such as North Macedonia with 278 diplomas, from Albania with 200 diplomas, Turkey with 122 diplomas, the United Kingdom with 28 diplomas, the United States of America with 25 diplomas, from Germany with 13 diplomas, Croatia with 10 diplomas, from Greece with 6 diplomas, Bosnia and Herzegovina with 13 diplomas, from Austria

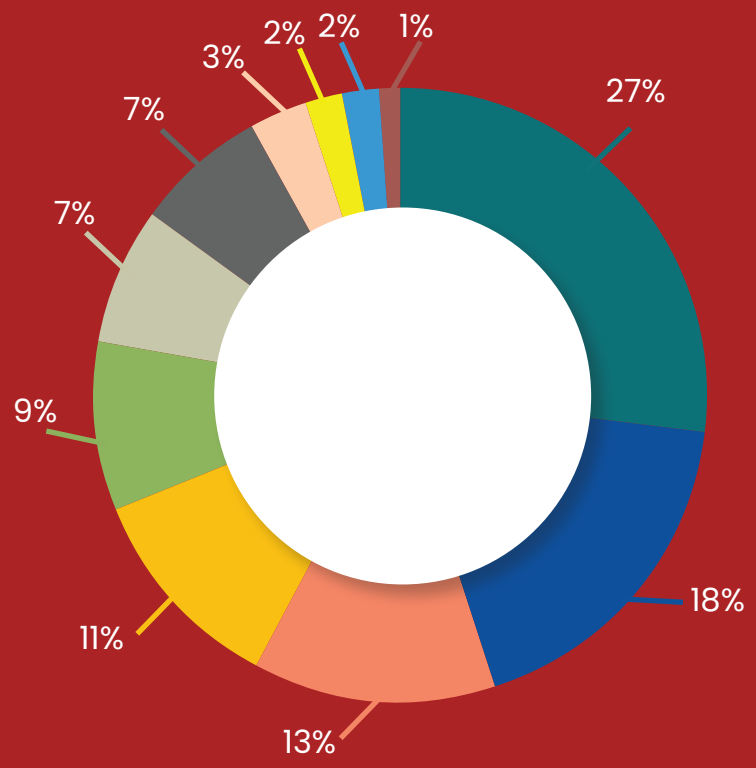
with 8 diplomas, Sweden with 4 diplomas, from Switzerland with 6 diplomas, Saudi Arabia with 6 diplomas, from France with 12 diplomas, Hungary with 6 diplomas, from Belgium with 3 diplomas, Jordan with 6 diplomas, from Montenegro with 6 diplomas, the Netherlands with 6 diplomas, from Slovenia with 4 diplomas, Norway with 3 diplomas, from Finland with 1 diploma and Bulgaria with 13 diplomas.

Number of diplomas recognized based on country of graduation - 2022



Requests for the recognition of diplomas during 2022 were from different fields, but the field of medical sciences and sports dominated with 210 diplomas, then the field of social sciences, education and humanities with 139 diplomas, continuing with the field of economic sciences with 102 diplomas. Next was the field of legal sciences with 85 diplomas, the field of linguistic sciences with 74 diplomas, the field of engineering sciences with 53 diplomas, the field of environmental, natural and mathematical sciences with 51 diplomas, the field of artistic sciences with 25 diplomas, the field of agricultural and veterinary sciences with 15 degrees, the field of architecture and urban planning sciences with 14 degrees and the field of Islamic studies sciences with 11 degrees.

Percentage of recognized diplomas in 2022 according to field of study



- **Medical and sports sciences**
- **Social sciences, education, and humanities**
- **Economic sciences**
- **Law sciences**
- **Linguistics**
- **Engineering sciences**
- **Environment, natural and mathematical sciences**
- **Arts**
- **Agricultural and veterinary sciences**
- **Architecture and Urban Planning sciences**
- **Islamic studies**

According to the Administrative Instruction for the procedures for recognition of diplomas, degrees and qualifications of vocational schools and universities acquired outside the Republic of Kosovo, the expected time for recognition of a diploma is from 1 to 4 months. But according to practice, the whole process does not last more than 2 months.

According to the officials at NARIC, there may be a delay in cases where diplomas come from private institutions, and especially those of the region, when there are delays in the response from the relevant institutions or when their response does not include complete information, such as information about the accreditation and validity of those diplomas. There were other cases of delays from countries that have not recognized Kosovo, so the authorities of that country do not respond to the requests of the NARIC for the verification of the validity of the diplomas. In these cases, NARIC tries to get information through a verbal note or the diplomatic service, but also from the centres of the EU countries.

During the year 2022, the State Council for Recognition (SCR) has decided on the recognition or non-recognition of diplomas obtained in Public and Private Higher Education Institutions outside the Republic of Kosovo.

The State Council for Recognition (SCR) held a total of eleven (11) meetings; on 21 January, 22 February, 4 March, 15 April, 31 May, 23 June, 22 July, 22 September, 20 October, 25 November and 16 December, through which 1 thousand 132 decisions were made about the recognition or non-recognition of diplomas.

SCR has made positive decisions for 1 thousand 106 subjects, 23 of the fifth level, 291 of the Bachelor's level, 553 of the Master's level and 239 of the doctoral level.

Negative decisions have been given for 15 Bachelor's degrees and 10 Master's degrees.

In January, the SCR recognized four (4) level 5 diplomas, fifteen (15) Bachelor's level diplomas, thirty-one (31) Master's level diplomas and thirteen (13) doctoral level diplomas. A total of 63 diplomas were recognized, while they did not recognize a bachelor's degree.

In the month of February, seven (7) level 5 diplomas were recognized by the SCR, 40 bachelor's level diplomas, 70 master's level degrees and 26 doctorate level degrees. A total of 143 diplomas were recognized in this period, while one bachelor's degree and two master's degrees were not recognized.

In March, the SCR recognized a total of fifteen (15) Bachelor's degrees, twenty-five (25) Master's degrees and seventeen (17) doctoral degrees. A total of 57 diplomas were recognized.

In April, the SCR recognized 2 diplomas of level 5, 14 diplomas of Bachelor's level, 27 diplomas of Master's level and 9 of doctoral level. A total of 52 degrees were recognized.

In May, the SCR recognized 42 bachelor's degrees, 86 master's degrees and 36 doctoral degrees. A total of 164 diplomas have been recognized, while they have not recognized a bachelor's degree.

Meanwhile, in the month of June, the SCR recognized three diplomas of level 5, 28 diplomas of Bachelor's level, 52 diplomas of Master's level and 30 diplomas of doctoral level. A total of 113 diplomas were recognized, while 9 diplomas of the Bachelor's level and 8 of the Master's level were not recognized.

During the month of July, the SCR recognized 17 bachelor's degrees, 27 master's degrees and 11 doctoral degrees. A total of 55 diplomas were recognized.

In August, the SCR recognized 11 bachelor's degrees, 29 master's degrees and 15 doctoral degrees. A total of 55 diplomas were recognized.

In the month of September, the SCR recognized 1 diploma of level 5, 24 diplomas of Bachelor's level, 30 diplomas of Master's level and 10 diplomas of doctoral level. A total of 65 diplomas have been recognized, while two Bachelor's degree diplomas have not been recognized.

In October, the SCR recognized two diplomas of level 5, 13 diplomas of Bachelor's level, 40 diplomas of Master's level and 22 diplomas of doctoral level. A total of 77 diplomas were recognized.

In the month of November, the SCR recognized 1 diploma of level 5, 29 diplomas of Bachelor's level, 67 diplomas of Master's level and 23 diplomas of doctoral level. A total of 120 diplomas have been recognized, while they have not recognized a Bachelor's degree.

Meanwhile, in December, the SCR recognized 3 diplomas of the 5th level, 43 diplomas of the Bachelor's level, 69 diplomas of the Master's level and 27 diplomas of the doctoral level. A total of 142 diplomas were recognized, while they did not recognize a Master's degree.

For comparison, in the previous report with data for 2021, the State Council for Recognition had made positive decisions or had recognized 560 diplomas, of which 16 were of the fifth level, 174 of the Bachelor's level, 241 of the Master's level and 129 of doctoral level. Meanwhile, they had not recognized 9 diplomas of level 5.

OVERVIEW OF THE DECISIONS OF THE STATE COUNCIL FOR RECOGNITION DURING 2022

JANUARY	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
Level 5	4	
Bachelor	15	1
Master	31	
PhD	13	
Total	63	1

FEBRUARY	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
Level 5	7	
Bachelor	40	1
Master	70	2
PhD	26	
Total	143	3

MARCH	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
Level 5		
Bachelor	15	
Master	25	
PhD	17	
Total	57	

APRIL	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
Level 5	2	
Bachelor	14	
Master	27	
PhD	9	
Total	52	

MAY	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
Level 5		
Bachelor	42	1
Master	86	
PhD	36	
Total	164	1

JUNE	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
Level 5	3	
Bachelor	28	9
Master	52	8
PhD	30	
Total	113	

JULY	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
Level 5		
Bachelor	17	
Master	27	
PhD	11	
Total	55	

AUGUST	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
Level 5		
Bachelor	11	
Master	29	
PhD	15	
Total	55	

SEPTEMBER	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
Level 5	1	
Bachelor	24	2
Master	30	
PhD	10	
Total	65	2

OCTOBER	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
Level 5	2	
Bachelor	13	
Master	40	
PhD	22	
Total	77	

NOVEMBER	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
Level 5	1	
Bachelor	29	1
Master	67	
PhD	23	
Total	120	1

DECEMBER	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
Level 5	3	
Bachelor	43	1
Master	69	
PhD	27	
Total	142	1

Grand Total: 1,132

DIPLOMAS WITHOUT A DECISION FOR RECOGNITION

The National Academic Recognition and Information Centre (NARIC), for the period January-December 2022, has a total of 240 diplomas which are still in the process of recognition and for which a decision has not been given for recognition or non-recognition.

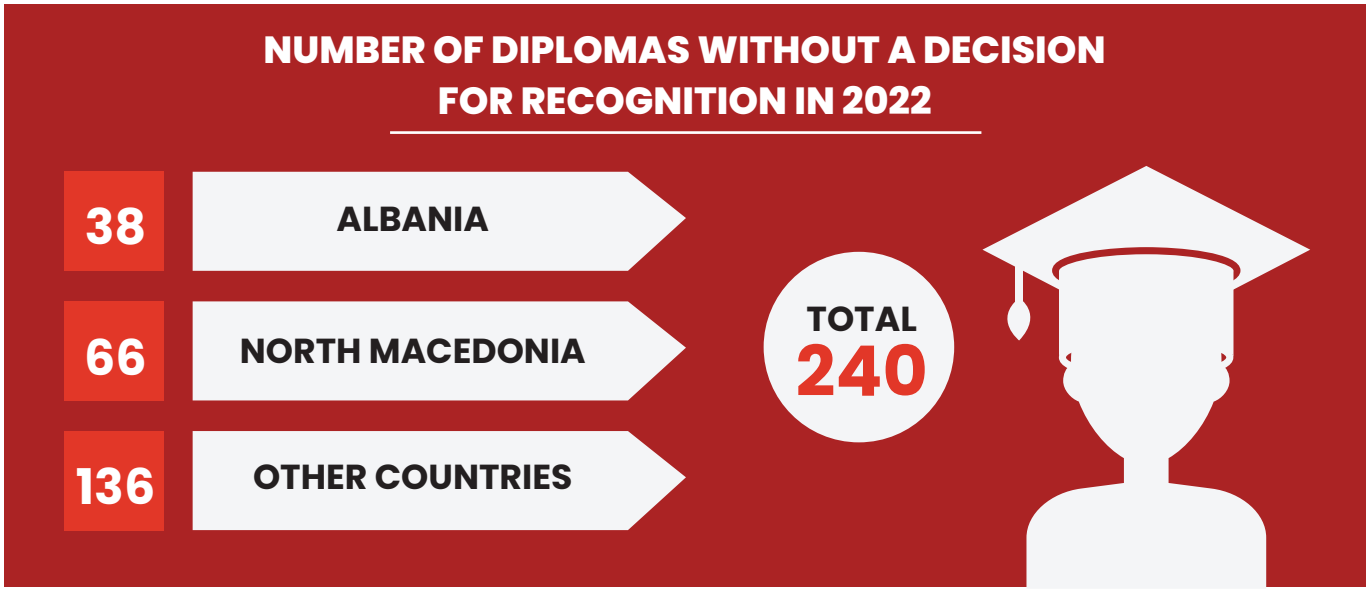
The number of these diplomas that still lack an answer, which come from the state of Albania is 38, from the state of North Macedonia there are 66 diplomas, while the total number of unanswered subjects from other countries is 136.

The reasons that these diplomas have remained without a decision on recognition or non-recognition by NARIC, remain similar to those in the past reports published by us, which were as follows:

There are no answers from the institutions where the candidates have completed their studies; There is no information related to the accreditation of the program or the institution, and NARIC is waiting for the answer for accreditation; Diplomas come from institutions of countries that do not recognize Kosovo as a country; Delays in response from Turkish institutions; Unclear answers about the validity of the diploma from the institutions of Albania; etc.

For comparison, in the previous report of 2021, there were a total of 203 diplomas which had not yet received a response from NARIC for recognition or non-recognition.

The number of diplomas that were without an answer, which came from the state of Albania was 75, from the state of North Macedonia there were 48 diplomas, while the total number of subjects without answers from other countries was 80.



VERIFICATION OF KOSOVO DIPLOMAS IN NARIC

According to the data collected by this centre during the year 2022, the component of the verification of diplomas obtained within Kosovo with the purpose of using them abroad has reached a total of 4 thousand 32.

Diplomas from public higher education institutions and private higher education institutions were verified in the following months.
In January, 327 diplomas were verified, in February 316, in March 265 diplomas were verified, in April 252, in May a total of 315 diplomas were verified.

In June 2022, 320 diplomas were verified, in July 387, in August 306 diplomas were verified, in September a total of 410 diplomas were verified.
In October, 377 diplomas were verified, in November 345, while in December, a total of 412 diplomas were verified.

NARIC has not yet created a special column through which the parties can declare for what reason they are verifying the degree, but according to the NARIC, in most cases the parties have self-declared the reason for the request for diploma verification and most of them, have said that they are doing this to go abroad to continue their studies or to look for a job outside Kosovo.

VERIFICATION OF DIPLOMAS 2022



Total: 4,032

THE CHALLENGES OF THE NARIC CENTRE

INSUFFICIENT STAFF

NARIC Centre continues to face serious lack of human resources through whom they would do case reviews. This challenge continues because of lack of possibility to recruit, as a result of a lack of an organogram by the Ministry of Education and its divisions, which is still being drafted.

Temporary recruitment of contractors/individual experts is still done through the e-procurement platform, and 70% of services or activities of this centre are done through them. Often the Centre has only one official for Higher Education and one official for Pre-University Education as a result of service contracts ending, despite the large volume of work or requests that come through.

We once more propose that this centre should have support from permanent professional staff or find other fixed term solutions such as hiring consultants with relevant experience.

ONLINE DATABASE

The National Academic Recognition and Information Centre continues to function without a digital database. From 2021, NARIC has an online database for applications for recognition/equivalence of diplomas, through which applicants have access to information about their application. They also receive a code through which they will be informed about the stage of their application. However, NARIC also needs a platform that includes the component of verification/validation of diplomas for use abroad.

Since September 2018, NARIC was functioning without an online database, which would contain data for all the cases they've accepted, that are in process, or those that they have reviewed. NARIC officials are forced to search for any information physically in documents in archives. So, a digital data-

base is once more proposed, which would enable the saving and archiving of data for recognitions/equivalence of diplomas throughout the years.

INTERACTIVE DATABASE

Such a database would be useful for other countries that need access to information about the education system in Kosovo. This would also make the procedures for Kosovar students easier, who for different reasons use their diplomas outside the country. This centre still does not possess a database on the pre-university and higher education in Kosovo which should be published in NARIC's website.

NARIC NOT BEING PART OF THE ENIC NETWORK

So far NARIC has had limited access to institutions and programs regarding information that should be gathered to recognize diplomas obtained abroad. This is a result of NARIC not being part of the European Network of Information Centres – ENIC. This is a result of Kosovo not being part of the Council of Europe and UNESCO, through which it would be obligatory to be part of ENIC as well.

APPOINTING A MEMBER WITHOUT A PHD IN THE STATE COUNCIL OF RECOGNITION

In March 2022, the Ministry of Education appointed Mrs. Ajshe Bytyqi in the position of a member of the State Council of Recognition to cover the field of Economics regarding the requirements for recognition of the doctorate of candidates who have completed their studies outside Kosovo.

According to the Administrative Instruction on the Principles and Procedures of Recognition of Vocational High School Diplomas and University Degrees Earned Outside the Republic of Kosova[8], in Article 5, which talks

8 Administrative Instruction 12/2018 on the Principles and Procedures for the Recognition of Diplomas, Degrees and Qualifications of Higher Professional and University Schools Obtained Outside the Republic of Kosovo, link: https://masht.rks-gov.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/ua-nr-12-2018-parimet-dhe-procedurat-e-njohjese-se-diplamave-gradave-dhe-kualifikimeve-te-shkollave-te-lart-profesionale-dhe-universitare-te-fituar-jashte-republikese-se-kosoves-x.pdf

about the State Council for Recognition, in point 2 it is stated that the professional members must be with relevant experience in higher education matters.

Meanwhile, the new member is only a Bachelor's graduate and during the discussion at the first meeting in this council, she stated that she has no work experience in higher education. Based on these two facts, it can be considered inappropriate that the evaluation of the doctorates of different candidates is done by a member whose only qualification is a Bachelor's and has no relevant experience in higher education.

SUSPENDED CASES FROM THE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN ALBANIA

It's been years since the Kosovo NARIC centre has delays in responding to applicants or recognizing diplomas obtained in Albania. This problem continues, because of contradictory answers for diplomas obtained in private universities in Albania, especially in diplomas obtained in institutions that have since closed.

For diplomas obtained in the former University Kristal, SCR does not recognize them since the Centre for Education Services (CES) in Albania does not recognize them as well. While for other diplomas obtained in private colleges in Albania, the decisions are taken case-by-case.

LACK OF SPECIAL LAW FOR NARIC

The National Academic Recognition and Information Centre (NARIC) still operates without a special law that would regulate the work specifics and the decision-making for recognition, verification and equivalence of diplomas. This centre has said that during 2023 they will initiate the concept-document which will then further be developed in other procedures, if it's supported by the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI).

The lack of a special law that regulates the work of NARIC remains one of

the most difficult challenges that NARIC faces and that's because now there's court precedence in which the Court has obligated the Ministry of Education, specifically the State Council for Recognitions (SCR), to implement its decision in recognizing diplomas.

LAWSUITS FOR NON-RECOGNITION OF DIPLOMAS

During the year 2022, NARIC faced a lawsuit in the Court as a result of not recognizing the degree of 'Juris Doctor' (JD) as a doctorate of a candidate. The case was returned for reconsideration through the court order and the recommendation of the Appeals Commission within the Ministry of Education, but the State Council for Recognition continues to stand behind the preliminary decision that this degree cannot be equated with a doctorate.

The Juris Doctor (JD) degree, in the United States of America, is recognized as a professional degree after the Bachelor's degree. (The system of Higher Education in the USA differs from that in Europe.)

The case was also re-examined by experts in the field who assessed that these two degrees cannot be equated.

There were similar cases during the year 2021, when NARIC and SCR were facing the Basic Court in Prishtina, after the Negative decision about the equivalence of another Juris Doctor degree with the eighth level of studies, i.e. as a doctorate.

The competent bodies for the recognition of diplomas, NARIC and SCR, had rejected such a decision and appealed to the Court of Appeal.

According to the head of the State Council for Recognition, Kumrije Gagica, in the case mentioned above, the State Lawyer was not present in the Court and the leader of NARIC, who is also the head of SCR, was without legal counsel from the legal office of the Ministry of Education. or the State Lawyer. The absence of the State Lawyer in court hearings in which it is called to defend the institution, in this case the Ministry of Education, remains worrying.

The National Centre for Diploma Recognition has also been sued by other parties who have taken negative decisions on the recognition of diplomas obtained at private universities in Albania.

Such an example is the diplomas earned at the former Kristal University, since the Centre for Educational Services (CES) within the Ministry of Education and Sports (MES) does not consider the diplomas earned at this institution to be valid.

The situation is similar with the diplomas obtained in some of the private institutions of higher education, which are currently closed and according to NARIC, for these lawsuits they presented the necessary evidence before the court to argue the negative decisions for non-recognition of the diplomas. For such cases, NARIC is still waiting for a final decision from the competent court.

However, there are cases when diplomas obtained in private institutions of higher education in Albania are recognized, so these decisions differ depending on the official documents and responses of the relevant institutions there.

DOMESTIC DIPLOMAS REMAINING UNVERIFIED

During 2022, the Commission for the Verification of Diplomas issued by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Kosovo continued its work, which was established by the Ministry of Education as a result of the increase in cases of students complaining that they are not able to verify their diplomas due to various irregularities on the part of higher education insti-

tutions, in the implementation of by-laws for keeping registration books, such as exceeding the quota of students who can enrol in study programs, registering students in programs that have not had accreditation, transfer of students from one program to another, and others.

This commission, so far, has decided and assessed that the diplomas of 11,300 former students of higher education institutions in Kosovo should be verified.[9]

WORK METHODOLOGY OF THE COMMISSION FOR THE VERIFICATION OF REMAINING DIPLOMAS

The Commission had divided the cases into two groups that have problems in the verification of diplomas;

1. The parties who have failed to validate their diplomas as a result of omissions when the college/university "knowingly" enrolled students in certain programs without having institutional or program accreditation, without having a license, when HEIs have exceeded the registration quotas set by the Accreditation Agency (*e.g. at X college/university in program Y, 50 quotas have been set, while the college/university has registered 100 students*), when students have been transferred from one program to another within college/university without the awareness of students (*e.g. students are studying nursing, while in the system they appear in psychology*), etc. and

2. Parties that have fallen prey to technical omissions, such as the delay in sending the Registration Book from the college/university to the Ministry, or even the delay by the Ministry to process and register students in the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS).

According to the working methodology, this commission has decided that for all cases where violations are found as in point 1 of the paragraph above, the diplomas will be declared invalid.

9 * The data in this report are not final data of the work or decisions of this commission, since this body has not yet ceased to act.

Meanwhile, for all the cases of point 2, when it is ascertained according to the education inspectorate that the students have attended the lectures, finished their exams, have proof of the semester pay slips, etc., their diplomas will be declared valid.

DIPLOMAS EARNED AT PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES THAT HAVE NOT BEEN VERIFIED THROUGHOUT YEARS

The former students of accredited programs in the branches of the University of Prishtina (Prizren, Gjakova, Peja, Mitrovica and Gjilan) have not been able to verify their diplomas for years and this is a consequence of the establishment of other public universities which then issued the diplomas in the name of the respective university.

Based on the agreements between public universities, for this type of diplomas, the commission decided that the former students of these programs will have their diplomas stamped and the transfer of the accreditation decision of those programs to the respective universities will be considered valid.

In the lists submitted by public universities, the number of students whose diplomas have not been stamped for years is 9 thousand and 285.

Meanwhile, a different situation of non-verification of diplomas issued by public universities were also the cases when the universities in question had encountered technical problems for the registration of students in HEMIS, for the academic years 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20.

The number of former students of these academic years that this commission decided to verify or seal their diplomas, reaches 4 thousand 609.

DIPLOMAS EARNED AT PRIVATE COLLEGES THAT HAVE NOT BEEN VERIFIED THROUGHOUT YEARS

In recent years, the number of former students in private colleges in our country, complaining that they are not able to verify their diploma at the National Academic Recognition and Information Centre (NARIC) has increased.

This was impossible for various reasons such as, the program where the student completed her studies was not accredited or did not have institutional accreditation during her studies, the student's data were not found in the Higher Education Management Information System because the institution had enrolled more students than was foreseen through the decision of the Kosovo Accreditation Agency, the institution had transferred students from one program to another without informing them, and many others.

4 thousand 678 students who were not registered in HEMIS and who managed to testify about the continuity of their studies, had their diplomas verified.

Meanwhile, the number of former students for whom it has been decided to verify their diplomas and who have had problems for various reasons is 6,691.

The commission appointed to solve these problems has not addressed the complaints of former students or colleges that had worked without a license, without accreditation and those that had exceeded the quota of student registration for the program set by the Kosovo Agency for Accreditation.

CONCLUSIONS

The National Academic Recognition and Information Centre (NARIC) has been facing various problems for years that are preventing or slowing down the verification of diplomas obtained within Kosovo, as well as other challenges that are making it impossible to recognize diplomas obtained abroad.

The lack of a special law that regulates the efficient operation of this centre is one of the biggest shortcomings. Currently, NARIC cannot properly defend its decisions before the law and the courts, since its work is mainly regulated by administrative instructions, which in the Court do not have the same weight as the law.

The Diploma Verification Commission has decided to stamp the diplomas of 11,300 former students of higher education institutions in Kosovo.

For former students who failed to verify their diplomas and who were victims of fraud by higher education institutions, no judicial process has yet been initiated for their compensation, nor have the licenses of these institutions been revoked by the Ministry of Education, so there is no accountability for these failures from any of the links of institutional responsibility.

In the meantime, the requests for verification of diplomas at the National Centre for Diploma Recognition in order to use them outside of our country are continuing to increase, and according to the officials at NARIC, in most cases, applicants state that they need the document for migrating from Kosovo.

The centre for recognition and verification of diplomas has a low number of relevant staff or officials to perform the services offered by this centre.

It is also necessary to create and operationalize several types of databases that would improve the quality of work within the centre and its image before the local and international public, through the publication

of information necessary for interested parties for the various services it offers. This also includes data on requests for recognition of diplomas divided according to the scientific titles BA, MA or PhD for all the countries from which these diplomas came, to see the possibility of making special policies for the protection of quality in Kosovo, and which can be compromised by fictitious diplomas or from countries without real quality assurance.

DISCLAIMER:

This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the Austrian Development Agency, as part of the project "Higher Education Intervention 2025 – HEI'25". The views and opinions expressed herein, can in no way reflect the official opinion of the Austrian Development Agency.

With funding from

Austrian Development Cooperation

Republika e Kosovës
Republika Kosova -Republic of Kosovo
Qeveria - Vlada - Government
Ministria e Arsimit, e Shkencës, Teknologjisë dhe Inovacionit
Ministarstvo za Obrazovanje, Nauku, Tehnologiju i Inovacije
Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation

Agjencia e Kosovës për Akreditim
Agencija Kosova za Akreditaciju
Kosovo Accreditation Agency

KEC
Qendra për Arsim e Kosovës
Kosova Education Center

ORCA
organizata për rritjen e cilësisë në arsim