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MONITORING REPORT OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMIC RECOGNITION INFORMATION CENTER – NARIC 2024



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ORCA – Organization for Improving Quality in Education
orca-ks.org
info@orca-ks.org
Henrik Bariç, Nr. 6,
Prishtina, 10000, Kosova

Author:
Liridona Ademaj

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“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

Contents

05 **Introduction**

07 **Executive Summary**

9 **Recognition of Foreign Diplomas**

12 Recognized Doctoral Diplomas

15 Recognized Master's Diplomas

18 Recognized Bachelor's Diplomas

21 Tabela e plotë e njohjeve sipas niveleve të studimit dhe shteteve origjinë të diplomave

23 Data on diploma recognition by field of study

26 **Verification of Diplomas Obtained in Kosovo**

28 **Challenges**

39 **The future of NARIC**

42 **How Does NARIC Work?**

45 **Legal Basis and Recognition Procedures**

Introduction

The National Academic Recognition Information Center, known as NARIC, together with the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA), represents one of the two core safeguards for ensuring the quality of higher education in Kosovo.

The NARIC Center is responsible for recognizing diplomas obtained abroad, thus serving as the first barrier against fraudulent degrees—particularly at the doctoral level—used by individuals seeking to enter Kosovo's higher education system as professors.

ORCA monitors NARIC's decisions and meetings to ensure transparency in the process. Through projects like Higher Education Intervention 2025 (HEI25) and Quality, Accountability, Integrity and Transparency in Higher Education (QAINT), supported by the Austrian Development Cooperation, technical assistance has been provided to identify and address the center's challenges.

This report is based on the monitoring of NARIC's work during 2024. It includes data on the recognition and verification of diplomas, their origins, operational challenges, and the center’s future outlook.

Executive Summary

- NARIC issued 720 decisions on recognition of foreign diplomas. Three diplomas were not recognized—two from Albania and one from Canada. An additional three from Serbia were also rejected. One U.S. diploma was recognized through a court decision.

- North Macedonia remains the top country of origin for recognized diplomas. 289 diplomas or 40% of all recognized diplomas in 2024 belong to this country. Albania is the second country with most recognized diplomas in Kosovo in 2024, with 115 diplomas, or 16% of them.

- 71% of all recognized diplomas in 2024 were issued in North Macedonia, Albania, and Turkey.

- Recognition by level: 148 Doctorate (21%), 350 Master's (49%), 212 Bachelor (29%), 9 Postsecondary/Vocational (1%).

- Most of the doctorates recognized in 2024 were from North Macedonia – 72 of them, or 49% of all doctorates.

- 28% of the diplomas recognized in 2024 are from the field of medical and sports sciences, 15% are from social sciences, education, and humanities, and 11% from economics.
- 4,188 diplomas obtained from educational institutions within Kosovo were verified by the NARIC center in 2024.

Recognition of Foreign Diplomas

Recognition is the formal acknowledgment of the validity of a diploma earned abroad. The data below provides an overview by country, field of study, and level of education.

Recognized Diplomas by Country

In 2024, NARIC recognized 720 foreign diplomas issued across 36 countries. The vast majority—71%—were from North Macedonia, Albania, and Turkey.

The 10 countries from which the most diplomas have been recognized in the last three years:

	2022		2023		2024	
1	North Macedonia	278	North Macedonia	354	North Macedonia	289
2	Albania	200	Albania	152	Albania	115
3	Turkey	122	Turkey	135	Turkey	110
4	United Kingdom	28	United States	31	Bosnia and Herzegovina	39
5	United States	25	United Kingdom	30	Croatia	17
6	Bulgaria	13	Italy	25	Bulgaria	15
7	Bosnia and Herzegovina	13	Bulgaria	18	Hungary	15
8	Germany	13	Saudi Arabia	13	Italy	12
9	France	12	Hungary	13	United States	12
10	Croatia	10	Croatia	13	United Kingdom	11

North Macedonia remains the top destination for Kosovars seeking education abroad. Additionally, a significant number of ethnic Albanians from North Macedonia operate professionally in Kosovo, which may explain the high number of recognized diplomas from this country.

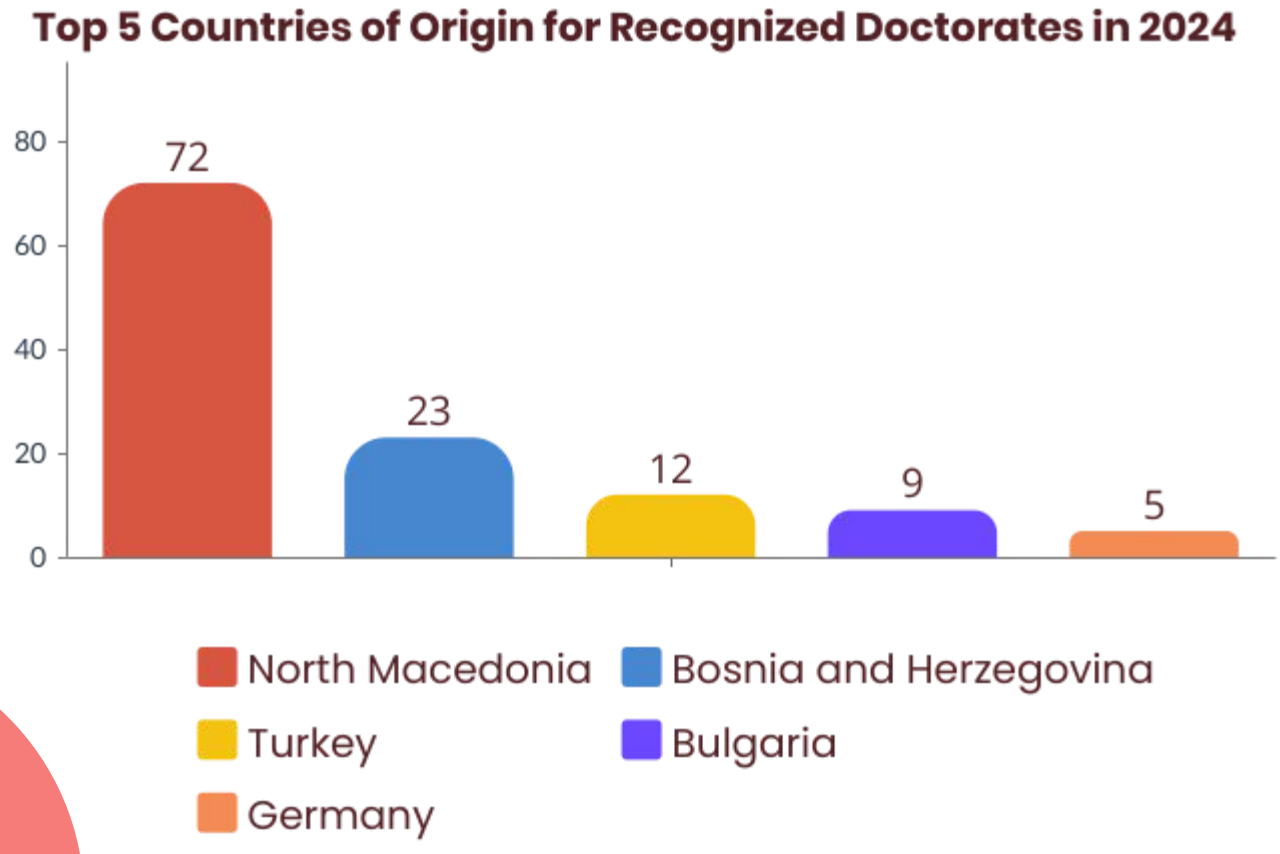
Albania ranks second in terms of recognized diplomas. Its higher education institutions host many Kosovar students and produce Albanian professionals who later work in Kosovo.

Turkey is in third place, very close behind Albania. A substantial number of Kosovars study in Turkey, and increasingly, Turkish nationals are operating professionally in Kosovo—proportionally more than nationals from Albania.

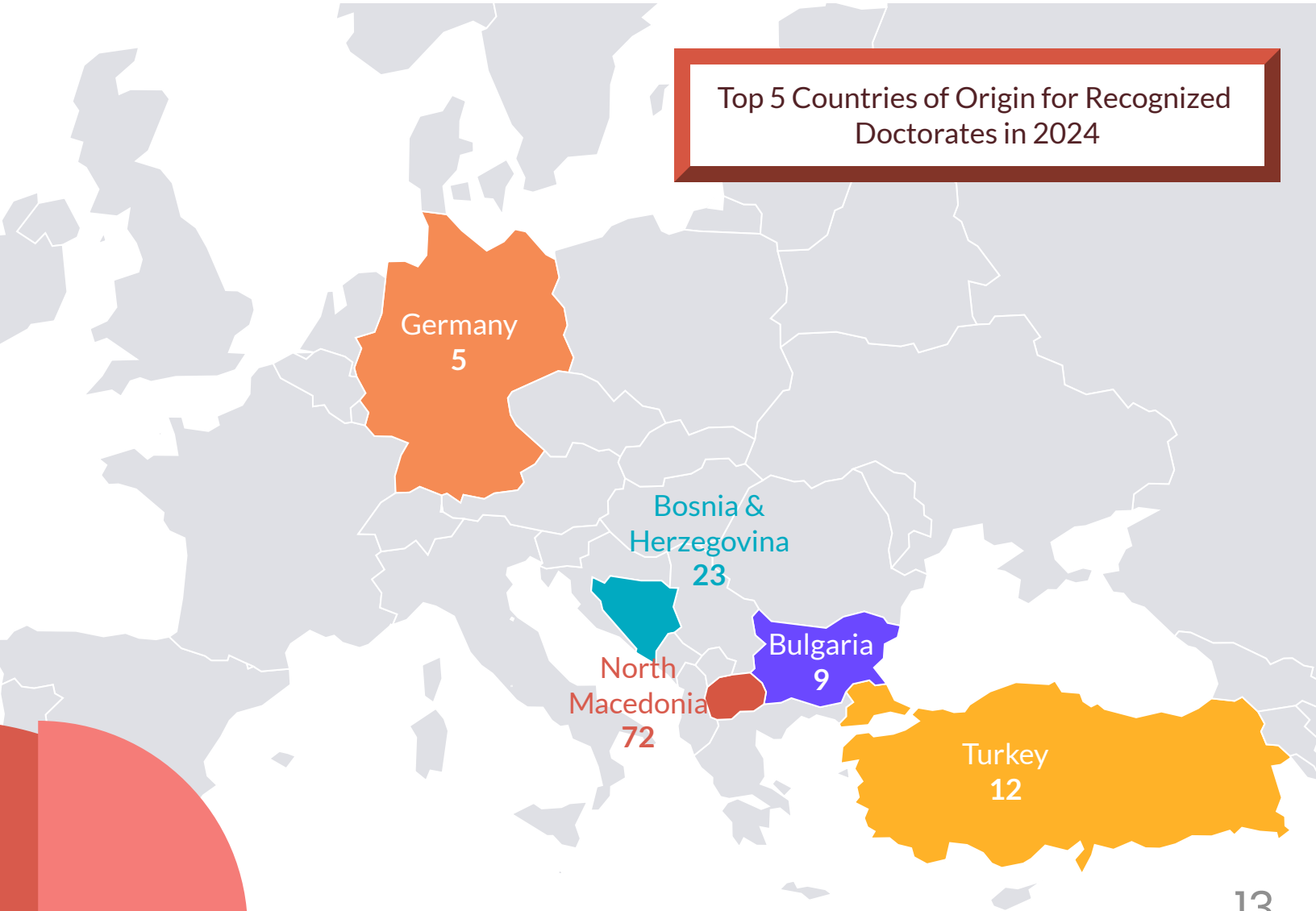
Recognized Doctoral Diplomas

The most significant academic qualification is the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) or equivalent, classified as Level 8 according to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). Holders of this qualification are eligible to be employed as university professors in Kosovo, provided they also have at least one scientific publication in an international journal.

ORCA closely monitors the processes and decisions related to academic appointments, and in past cases, has identified individuals attempting to use doctoral diplomas from fictitious institutions in the region to gain employment as professors.



In 2024, a total of 148 doctoral diplomas were recognized, accounting for 21% of all recognized qualifications. The country with the highest number of recognized doctorates was North Macedonia, followed by Bosnia and Herzegovina, and then Turkey. Together, these three countries accounted for 73% of all recognized doctorates in Kosovo in 2024. The remaining 27% came from 32 other countries.



If we compare with 2023, North Macedonia was again the country from which the most doctoral degrees were recognized, Albania was in second place, and Turkey was in third place. Thus, it can be observed that even in 2024, North Macedonia leads in requests for recognition of doctoral degrees in Kosovo, whereas in second place the country has changed from Albania to Bosnia and Herzegovina, while Turkey is again in third place.

Top 5 countries of origin of Doctorates in the last 2 years

2023

1. **North Macedonia**
2. **Albania** ↘
3. **Turkey**
4. **Bulgaria**
5. **Slovenia** ↘

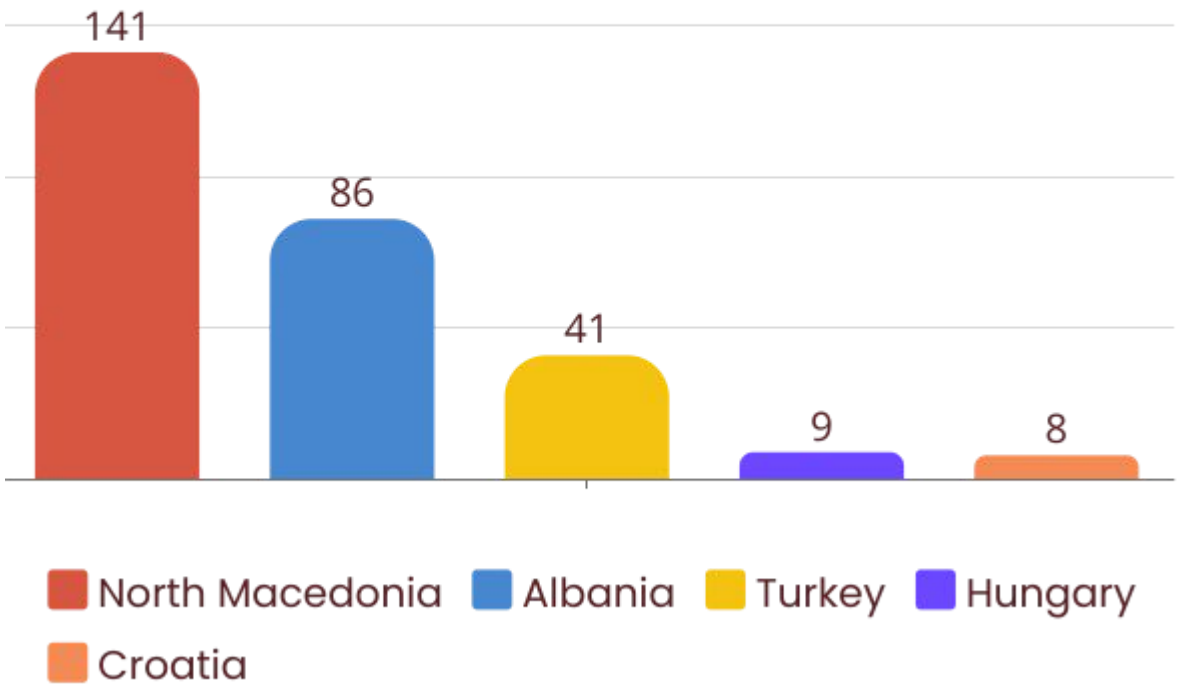
2024

1. **North Macedonia**
2. ↗ **Bosnia and Herzegovina**
3. **Turkey**
4. **Bulgaria**
5. ↗ **Germany**

Recognized Master's Diplomas

In terms of volume, master's degrees dominated the recognition process in 2024. A total of 347 master's diplomas were recognized, representing 48% of all recognized qualifications that year.

Top 5 Countries of Origin for Recognized Master's Degrees in 2024:



The three countries from which Kosovo recognized the highest number of master's degrees in 2024 were North Macedonia, Albania and Turkey. This qualification level accounted for more than half of all recognized diplomas in 2024.

Combined, these three countries made up 77% of all recognized master's diplomas.



In comparison to 2023, North Macedonia, Albania, and Turkey have remained the top three countries of origin for recognized master's diplomas. However, Hungary and Croatia have taken the fourth and fifth spots in 2024, replacing United Kingdom and Italy.

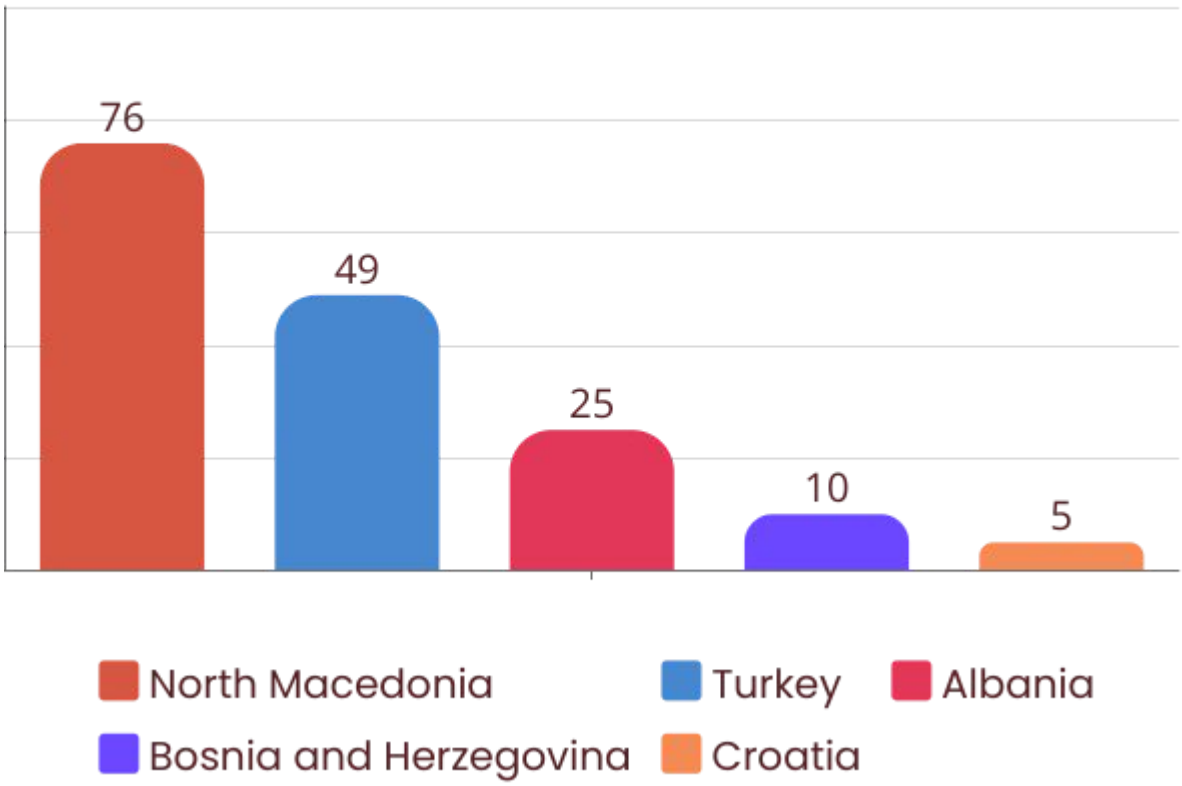
Top 5 countries of origin of Master's diplomas in the last 2 years

2023	2024
1 North Macedonia	1 North Macedonia
2 Albania	2 Albania
3 Turkey	3 Turkey
4 United Kingdom ↘	↗ 4 Hungary
5 Italy ↘	↗ 5 Croatia

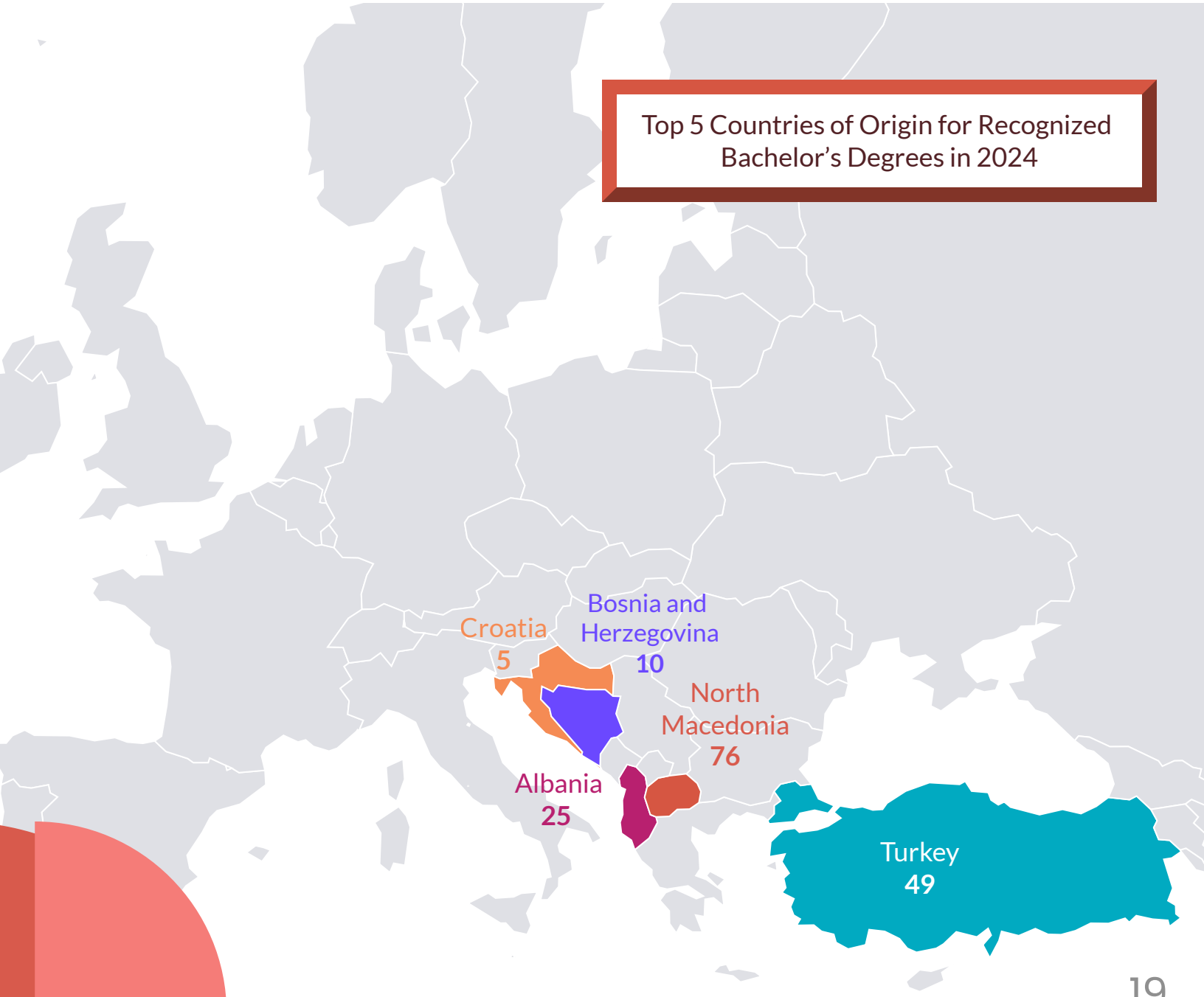
Recognized Bachelor's Diplomas

In 2024, 209 bachelor-level diplomas were recognized, which accounts for 29% of all diplomas recognized in Kosovo.

Top 5 Countries of Origin for Recognized Bachelor's Degrees in 2024



Regarding the bachelor's degree level, North Macedonia again leads as the country of origin for over 36% of all recognized bachelor's diplomas in Kosovo in 2024. Turkey ranks second, ahead of Albania, in the list of countries of origin for recognized bachelor's diplomas in Kosovo that year.



At the bachelor's level, as in the previous year, the three countries from which the highest number of diplomas were recognized continue to be North Macedonia, Turkey, and Albania.

Top 5 countries of origin of Bachelor's diplomas in the last 2 years

2023	2024
1 North Macedonia	1 North Macedonia
2 Turkey	2 Turkey
3 Albania	3 Albania
4 United States ↘	↗ 4 Bosnia and Herzegovina
5 Saudi Arabia ↘	↗ 5 Croatia

Full Table of Recognitions by Level of Study and Country of Origin

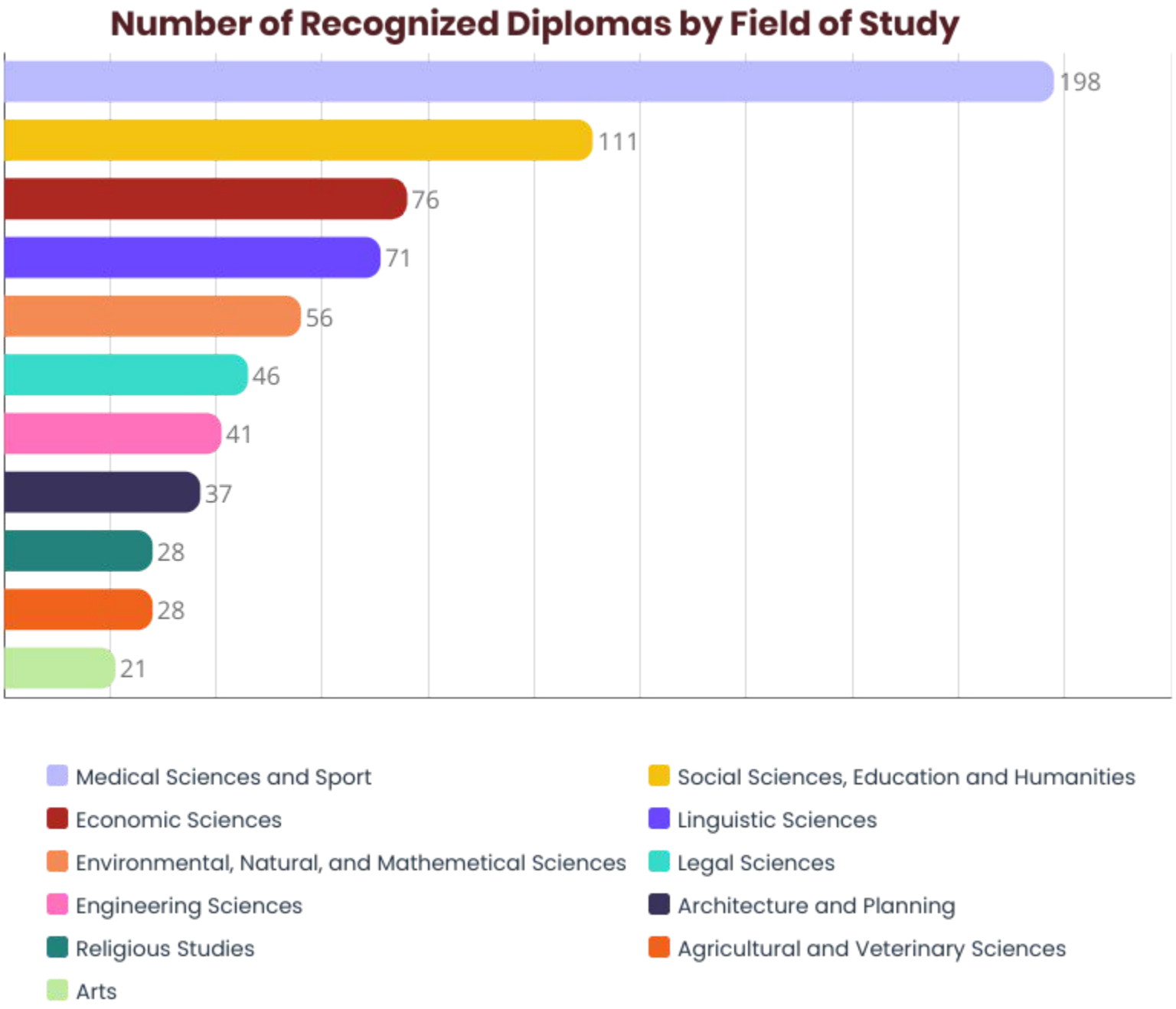
Country	Doctorate	Master	Bachelor	Level 5
North Macedonia	72	141	76	
Albania	4	86	25	
Turkey	12	41	49	8
Bosnia & Herzegovina	23	5	10	1
Croatia	4	8	5	
Bulgaria	9	4	2	
Hungary	2	9	4	
Italy	3	5	4	
United States	2	8	2	
United Kingdom	1	6	4	
Greece	2	7	1	
Germany	5	3	1	
Jordan	1	2	5	
Saudi Arabia		2	5	
Austria	3	4		
France	3	2	2	
Netherlands	1	2	1	
Slovenia	1	2		
Sweden		3		

Full Table of Recognitions by Level of Study and Country of Origin

Country	Doctorate	Master	Bachelor	Level 5
Australia		1	1	
Malaysia		1	1	
Poland			2	
Switzerland		2		
Belgium		1		
Czech Republic			1	
Philippines			1	
Finland			1	
India			1	
Ireland		1		
Iceland			1	
Israel			1	
Canada			1	
Lithuania		1		
Montenegro			1	
Cyprus			1	
Total	**148**	**347**	**209**	**9**

Data on diploma recognition by field of study

There are 11 fields of study categorized by the NARIC Center. The chart below presents the number of recognized diplomas per field, expressed in percentages.



Comparison of fields of study with previous years

Field of Study	2022	2023	2024
Medical Sciences and Sports	210	258	198
Social Sciences, Education, and Humanities	139	160	111
Economic Sciences	102	83	76
Linguistic Sciences	74	79	71
Environmental, Natural, and Mathemetical Sciences	51	25	56
Legal Sciences	85	39	46
Engineering Sciences	53	85	41
Architecture and Planning	14	51	37
Religious Studies	11	24	28
Agricultural and Veterinary Sciences	15	14	28
Arts	25	24	21

The NARIC Center uses its own categorization of fields of study for the purposes of diploma recognition. According to this classification, 28% of the diplomas recognized in 2024 fall under the field of medical sciences and sports. This means that health-related qualifications, and to a lesser extent those in sports, were the most frequently imported into Kosovo. Medical and sports sciences, combined with social sciences, education, and humanities, make up nearly half of all foreign diplomas recognized in Kosovo.

Verification of Diplomas Obtained in Kosovo

Verification refers to the formal confirmation of diplomas or qualifications obtained from institutions within Kosovo. Typically, there are more requests for verification than for recognition. In 2024, a total of 4,188 diplomas were verified.

Verified Diplomas	
Year	**Number**
2022	4,032
2023	3,212
2024	4,188
Total	**11,432**

The NARIC Center does not have a specific section in the application process where applicants can state the reason for requesting verification. However, according to NARIC, in most cases, applicants self-declare their reasons, and the majority have indicated that the verification is needed to study or work abroad.

A comparison of diploma verification figures over the past three years shows that each year, over 3,000 professionals have verified their diplomas for use outside Kosovo. This is likely done either for further education or employment abroad.

Challenges

Most of the challenges faced by the NARIC Center in 2024 are the same as in previous years.
With the support of the HEI25 project, a needs assessment for the Center was conducted in 2023, resulting in a report with recommendations to address these challenges. Below is a list of the key challenges identified through monitoring, as well as other challenges outlined in the needs assessment, which remain relevant in 2024.

- Insufficient staffing
- Lack of a centralized database
- Unaccredited programs
- Inability to join ENIC
- Other challenges identified in the needs assessment
- Court cases

Insufficient Personnel and Lack of Digital Processes

The main challenge of NARIC Kosovo remains the limited number of staff. The core work of the Center involves handling applications for diploma recognition and verification. This has led to periods during the year when staff are fully occupied with client-facing tasks. In 2024, the NARIC Center employed: Two staff for pre-university education: one full-time official and one intern/consultant; Two staff for higher education: two officials and one intern/consultant. Given that processes are still carried out manually, it is impossible for such a small number of staff to complete verification and recognition procedures within legally prescribed deadlines.

Temporary recruitment of individual contractors/consultants still takes place through the e-procurement platform, and an estimated 70% of the services and activities of this center are handled by them.

Lack of a Centralized Database

The NARIC Center currently uses a digital platform for diploma recognition and verification applications, but unfortunately this platform cannot generate aggregated data on diploma type, field of study, level, country of origin, or other combinations. Such data would be crucial for informing center policy.

This report compiled the data manually—a process that could have been easily automated with a digital database. Such a database would enable answers to questions like:

Which countries account for the highest number of doctoral diplomas submitted for recognition? Are any of these countries producing a disproportionately large number of doctoral diplomas?

For instance, if 50% of doctoral diplomas submitted for recognition originate from one specific country, it would be important to assess their quality and determine whether targeted policy measures are needed to prevent potential harm to the labor market in Kosovo.

Similar data could also be gathered for verification of local diplomas, such as which professional profiles are seeking diploma verification to work abroad. This would help identify outflows of skilled workers, such as doctors, nurses, engineers, etc.

Unaccredited Programs

One of the main reasons for the non-recognition or non-verification of diplomas is that they were obtained in programs or institutions that were not accredited. Most of these cases involve diplomas earned many years ago, during a time when quality assurance mechanisms were not as developed in Kosovo or the region.

It is important to note that until recently, study programs in Albania were accredited by ministerial decision, without rigorous quality checks conducted by an independent agency, such as accreditation or quality assurance agencies. Many diplomas earned during that period were issued by fictitious universities, which were later the subject of criminal investigations in Albania. One example is Kristal University, which issued diplomas without students attending, operated in unlicensed buildings, and offered fraudulent study programs.[1]

[1] Skandal me Universitetin "Kristal", diplomë me 10 ditë prezencë, godina pa leje, regjistrime pa programe dhe diploma false. (2014) Sot.com.al.

The primary victims of such cases were the students themselves, who were unaware that the programs or institutions in which they were enrolled were not accredited.

Inability to Join the ENIC/NARIC Network

The National Academic Recognition Center has limited access to information about foreign institutions and programs—information it needs in order to recognize qualifications obtained in different countries.

Kosovo is not a member of the European Network of Information Centres (ENIC), which is due to Kosovo's lack of membership in UNESCO and the Council of Europe, both of which are ENIC's founding bodies.

Kosovo's membership in ENIC would facilitate easier recognition of academic and professional qualifications, promoting mobility for education and employment. Although the NARIC Center is not part of ENIC, it implements many of ENIC's principles and standards.

Unfortunately, the political obstacle of Kosovo's non-membership in the Council of Europe and UNESCO continues to penalize students, academic staff, and professionals, who—through ENIC—could otherwise have easier access to international education and labor markets.

Absence of a Dedicated Law for NARIC

The NARIC Center still operates without a specific law that regulates its mandate, decision-making procedures, and scope regarding recognition, verification, and equivalency of diplomas.
In 2024, no concept document was initiated that could lead to such legislation, pending support from the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI).

The lack of such a law remains one of the Center's most pressing challenges. There are now court cases where the Ministry of Education, specifically the State Council for Recognition and the NARIC Center, have been obliged by court rulings to recognize certain diplomas.

This happens because in judicial proceedings, the Center can only defend itself based on the Law on Higher Education, which does not define the operational specifics of the NARIC Center.

Meanwhile, administrative instructions, which have guided the Center's operations for years, carry less legal weight than a law in court. As long as a specific law does not exist, individuals may continue to gain diploma recognition through court orders, without passing through the expert filters of the State Council for Recognition, as is the regular procedure.

Court Lawsuits for Non-Recognition of Diplomas

In 2024, there were five lawsuits filed against the NARIC Center, none of which had been resolved by year-end. All the cases involved diplomas that were not recognized by the Center, whether due to inconsistencies in qualification levels or other reasons.

The future of NARIC

Digitalization

The NARIC Center is currently focused on the digitalization of all internal processes, including the collection and reporting of data. For this purpose, the Center is receiving support from international projects, such as HEI25, through which it has begun digitizing archived cases from 2018 to 2024.

This data will serve as the foundation for producing reliable information that can guide policies related to diploma recognition and verification, with the dual aim of safeguarding and ensuring the quality of higher education in Kosovo and facilitating mobility for citizens in employment and education abroad.

New Procedures

In recent years, the NARIC Center has faced criticism for the lack of a legal basis for the administrative instructions and secondary regulations that it had been applying. As a response, the Center is currently reviewing its regulatory documents to harmonize them with applicable laws.

A new regulation for the State Council for Recognition has improved the Council's performance and increased its functionality. The improvements include: Clearer procedures for the election of the chairperson, andMore frequent meetings, during which final decisions on recognition and verification are made.

In an effort to align its regulations with ENIC standards and advance European integration, the NARIC Center is also reviewing its recognition procedures for foreign diplomas.

This includes considering the introduction of three distinct processes for recognizing diplomas based on the country of origin: ENIC member states; Western Balkan countries; All other countries.

How Does NARIC Work?

Key Definitions

- **NATIONAL ACADEMIC RECOGNITION AND INFORMATION CENTER (NARIC)** - Composed of the NARIC Office and the State Council for Recognition, the center provides information on procedures for recognizing foreign diplomas and qualifications, as well as information—upon request from other countries—regarding Kosovo's higher education system and qualifications.

- **STATE COUNCIL FOR RECOGNITION (SCR)** – A decision-making body responsible for approving or rejecting applications for recognition/equivalence. It bases its decisions on the applicant's documentation and the report prepared by NARIC staff. In special cases, it may also rely on recommendations from an expert commission. The Council consists of university professors from various academic fields.

- **RECOGNITION** – An official acknowledgment by the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI) of a diploma obtained abroad. It confirms the diploma's authenticity and validity. Recognition—formerly known as nostrification—serves as formal confirmation that a diploma earned abroad is considered valid within Kosovo.

- **EQUIVALENCE** – An official acknowledgment by MESTI that a diploma earned abroad is both valid and comparable to a specific level and field of study within Kosovo's education system.

- **VERIFICATION** – A process to confirm the validity of a diploma obtained in an accredited institution within Kosovo. It determines the equivalence of credits and qualifications, ensuring that diplomas issued locally are recognized abroad. This certification service aims to support the international acceptance of degrees and credits earned at accredited institutions in Kosovo.

- **ACADEMIC INFORMATION SERVICE** – The third service offered by the NARIC Center. It provides information to institutions and citizens in Kosovo, including clarification of fields of study, interpretation of grade point averages, and credit systems.

Legal Basis and Recognition Procedures

The NARIC Center currently operates based on the following legal framework:

- The Law on Higher Education in the Republic of Kosovo.[1]
- The Administrative Instruction on the Verification of Educational Documents (public and private) for candidates studying abroad.[2]
- The Administrative Instruction on the Principles and Procedures for the Recognition of Diplomas, Degrees, and Qualifications of Professional Higher Schools and Universities Earned Outside the Republic of Kosovo.[3]
- The Rules of Procedure of the State Council for Recognition and of the field-specific expert commissions.[4]

[1] Ligji për Arsimin e Lartë, linku: https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=2761
[2] Udhëzimi Administrativ për Verifikimin e Dokumentacionit Shkollor (Publik dhe privat) për Nevojat e Kandidatëve që Shkollohen Jashtë Shtetit, linku: https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=10210
[3] Udhëzimi administrativ për Parimet dhe Procedurat e Njohjes së Diplomave, Gradave dhe Kualifikimeve të Shkollave të Larta Profesionale dhe Universitare të Fituara Jashtë Republikës së Kosovës, linku, https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=15228
[4] Faqja e Qendrës Kombëtare për Njohje të Diplomave: https://naric-ks.online/

Diplomas earned at public universities in the region and at universities listed in international university rankings such as the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), Times Higher Education (THE), and QS World University Ranking, are—once their authenticity and validity are confirmed by the respective country—recognized by the NARIC Center without referral to the State Council for Recognition.

Within the Council, the member representing the relevant field of study reviews the application for recognition. If there are no uncertainties, the case is signed off by this member, and the applicant receives a recognition decision from the NARIC Center. If needed, the case may be discussed with other Council members.

NARIC Kosovo requests information from centers of the ENIC/NARIC network regarding the status of higher education institutions, the validity of diplomas or certificates, their level according to the National/European Qualifications Framework, and other additional information needed to support the recognition or equivalence of the diploma.

The application for the recognition of qualifications from professional and university-level institutions obtained outside the Republic of Kosovo is possible through the Center's website. Diplomas earned abroad must undergo the recognition process by the Ministry of Education in order to confirm their authenticity and validity, whereas diplomas earned within Kosovo must go through the verification process to confirm the diploma's validity and credit equivalence, with the aim of facilitating their acceptance outside Kosovo.

Disclaimer:

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