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# NARIC KOSOVA MONITORING REPORT





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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 forgive 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]

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# DEFINITIONS

- **Recognition** - means an official acceptance by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST), of a diploma obtained outside the country, which confirms the accuracy and validity of the diploma
- **Equivalence** - means an official acceptance by MEST 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
- **NARIC**- National Academic Recognition and Information Center - is composed of the Office of the Center 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 Center and in special cases, based on the recommendations of the experts' commission. It is composed of university professors from different study fields.

# INTRODUCTION

The problems that have hindered the process of recognizing diplomas obtained outside the country, which has often been a topic of debate in our country, has pushed ORCA to start the monitoring of the National Academic Recognition and Information Center (NARIC Kosovo).

This report is the result of the monitoring of the work of the State Council for Recognition (SCR) in NARIC Kosovo, for the period of April – December 2019.

ORCA has participated in SCR's meetings, and has held continuous meetings with the staff of the NARIC Kosovo center, who have told us the challenges they face in their job.

The lack of a special law, the small number of staff, the lack of a regulation for the work of the SCR, foreign diplomas that for different reasons are stuck in the process or can't be recognized, the lack of an online database, are some of the challenges that are making the functioning of this center more difficult.



## LEGISLATION

NARIC Kosova currently works based on the *Law for Higher Education in the Republic of Kosovo*<sup>1</sup>, concretely on Article 5 ‘Access to higher education’, in which it is explained that the higher education institutions accredited in Kosovo, must coordinate with NARIC Kosovo, and on Article 6 ‘Competences and responsibilities of the Ministry in offering Higher Education’, where through point 1.6 it clarifies the rules related to academic and professional recognition, in accordance with European standards.

NARIC works based on the *Administrative Instruction on verification of school documentation (public and private), for candidates’ needs being educated abroad*<sup>2</sup>, through which the procedures of verifying and confirming the accuracy of school documents is regulated.

This center is also based on the *Administrative Instruction on the Principles and procedures of recognition of vocational high school diplomas and university degrees earned outside the Republic of Kosovo*.<sup>3</sup>

## RECOGNITION PROCEDURES

The cases of public regional universities and universities in global ranking lists, after obtaining confirmation by the country that they are authentic and valid, are approved by the staff of the NARIC Center. The universities in global ranking lists are those universities that are highly ranked in Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), Times Higher Education World University Ranking (THE) and QS World University Ranking.

The State Council for Recognitions reviews only the cases for which the NARIC Center believes that a higher expertise is needed, while for cases that come from prestigious higher education institutions, and cases from public regional universities, the SCR can delegate its competences to the head of the SCR, to sign the decision for recognition or equivalence, basing the decision on the file of the applicant and the report prepared by the NARIC official.

<sup>1</sup> <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=2761>

<sup>2</sup> <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=10210>

<sup>3</sup> <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=15228>

## NARIC KOSOVA DECISIONS

In the period of April - December 2019, a total of 970 decisions were taken by the National Academic Recognition and Information Center (NARIC Kosova), while 485 cases are in process that for years have not been given a response by the institutions where the applicants finished their studies, or the NARIC Centers of the respective countries did not respond.

### **SCR decisions**

During this period, the State Council for Recognitions (SCR) has held a total of ten meetings in the following dates: April 25, May 24, June 28, July 29, September 10, October 4, October 14, November 4, November 21, and December 26.

Part of these decisions are diplomas obtained in public and private higher education institutions.

In the meeting held on April 25, SCR recognized one diploma of level 5, 24 diplomas of Bachelor level, 26 of Master level, and six of PhD level, in total 57 recognized diplomas.

In the meeting held on May 24, SCR recognized two diplomas of level 5, 22 diplomas of Bachelor level, 21 of Master level, and eight of PhD level, in total 53 recognized diplomas.

In the meeting held on June 28, SCR recognized 16 diplomas of Bachelor level, while it rejected one diploma of this level, it recognized 22 of Master level, and 12 of PhD level, in total 51 diplomas were reviewed.

In the meeting held on July 29, SCR recognized 21 diplomas of Bachelor level, 17 of Master level, and seven of PhD level, in total 45 recognized diplomas.

In the meeting held on September 10, SCR recognized 19 diplomas of Bachelor level, while it rejected one diploma of this level, it recognized 24 of Master level, and 17 of PhD level, in total 61 diplomas were reviewed.

In the meeting held on October 4, SCR recognized 7 diplomas of Bachelor level, 21 of Master level, and 9 of PhD level, in total 38 recognized diplomas.

In the meeting held on October 14, SCR did not recognize two diplomas of Master level, while it recognized 1 diploma of Bachelor level, three in Master level, and in total six cases were reviewed.

In the meeting held on November 4, SCR recognized one diploma of level 5, 27 diplomas of Bachelor level, 17 of Master level, and 12 of PhD level, in total 59 recognized diplomas.

In the meeting held on November 21, SCR recognized 12 diplomas of Bachelor level, 12 of Master level, and 6 of PhD level, in total 30 recognized diplomas.

In the meeting held on December 26, SCR did not recognize one diploma of Bachelor level, while it recognized 14 diplomas of Bachelor level, 19 in Master level, and 9 in PhD level, and in total 48 cases were reviewed.

In total the SCR reviewed 441 cases, 4 of level 5, 167 of Bachelor level, 184 of Master level, and 86 of PhD level.

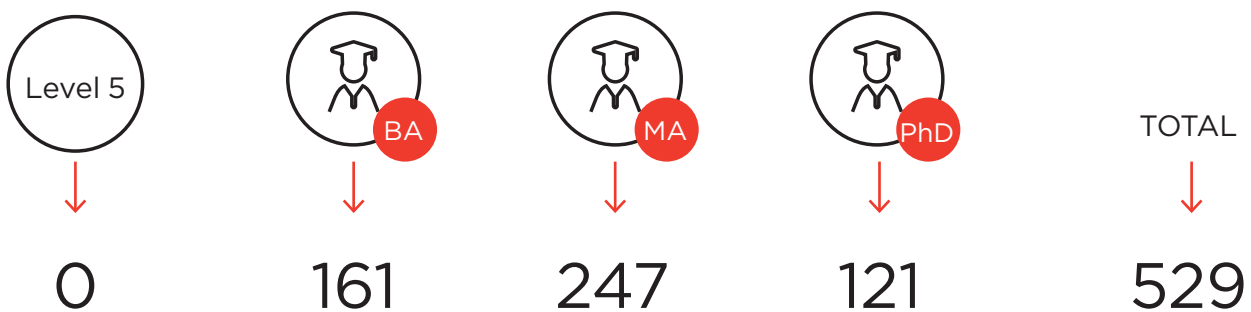
## The decisions of the staff of the Center

As for the number of cases or diplomas evaluated by the Office of the NARIC center, and not the State Council for Recognitions (SCR), for the diplomas obtained in regional and global universities, during the period of April - December 2019, the number reaches 529 diplomas.

Out of those, 161 approved diplomas were from Bachelor level of studies, 247 were Master level, and 121 were PhD level.

### Cases in the world rank lists, and regional public universities (Albania, North Macedonia), approved by the staff of the NARIC Kosova Center

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## All of the decisions of NARIC Kosova Center

The general number of recognized and rejected diplomas for the period of April - December 2019, is 970.

From level 5, four diplomas were approved, for Bachelor level 324 diplomas were approved, while four were rejected.

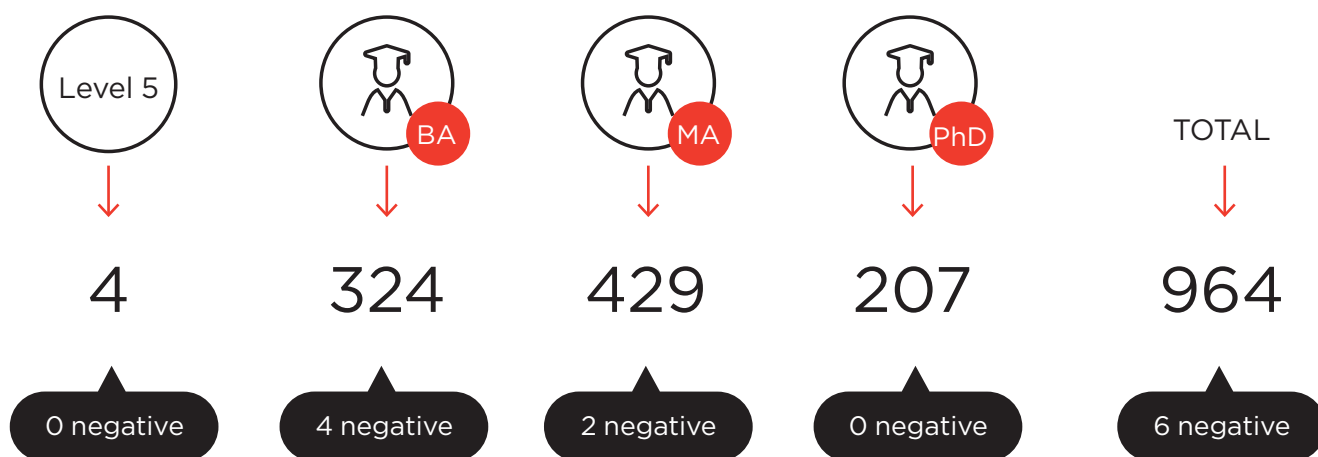
From Master level, 429 diplomas were approved, while two were rejected.

In PhD level, 207 diplomas were approved by NARIC Kosova.



Table with all the above mentioned data

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## Cases without a response

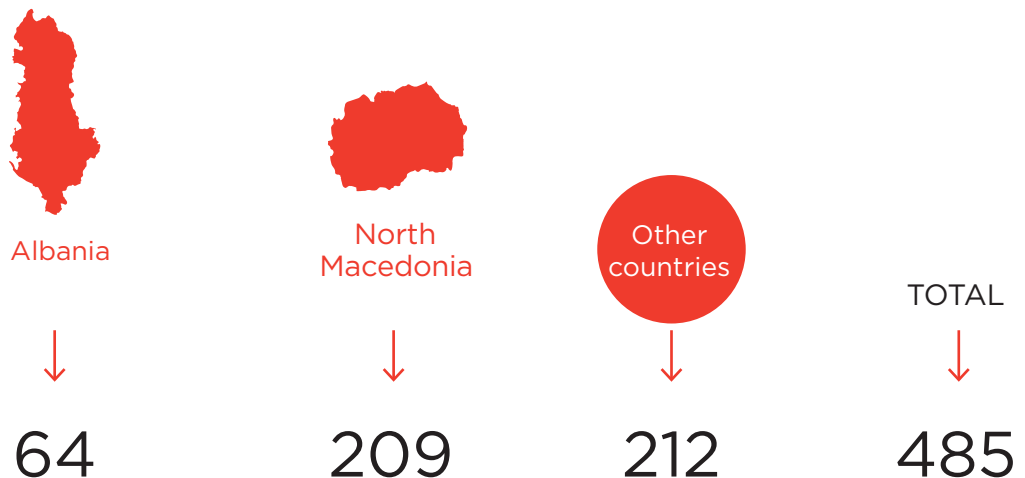
National Academic Recognition and Information Center (NARIC Kosova), has a total of 485 diplomas or cases that throughout the years have been left in the middle of the process and have not received an answer.

The number of diplomas without a response which come from Albania are 64, from North Macedonia there are 209 diplomas, while the general number of cases without a response or that have been left in the middle of the process from other countries is 212.

The reasons for a lack of response are different:

- There's no answer from the institutions where the applicants finished their studies
- There's no information related to the accreditation and NARIC Kosova is waiting for an answer for the accreditation
- The diplomas come from institutions of countries that do not recognize Kosovo as a country
- Delays in responses from Turkish institutions
- Unclear responses from Albanian institutions

**Cases accepted in continuity during the years, that are in process, and there's no decision for them**



Overview of State Council for Recognitions and NARIC Kosovo staff's decisions

		STATE COUNCIL FOR RECOGNITIONS												NARIC STAFF
		April	May	June	July	September	October	November	December				April - December	
		Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Negative	Negative	Negative	Positive	
<b>Level 5</b>		1	2					1					0	
<b>BA</b>		24	22	16	21	19	8	39	14	1			161	
<b>MA</b>		26	21	22	17	24	24	29	19	2			247	
<b>PhD</b>		6	8	12	7	17	9	18	9				121	
<b>Total</b>		57	53	51	45	61	44	87	43					
<b>Total</b>		<b>441</b>												<b>529</b>

# THE CHALLENGES OF THE NARIC KOSOVA CENTER

## **Online database**

From September 2018, NARIC is functioning without an online database, which contains data for all the cases they've accepted, that are in process, or those that they have reviewed.

According to the head of this division and other officials, this database has malfunctioned for a year, and that the lack of a database is making their job more difficult, since now they have to physically search for information in archived documents.

So, a digital database is proposed, which would enable the saving and archiving of data for recognitions/equivalence of diplomas throughout the years.

## **Interactive database**

Compiling a document/database about the pre-university and higher education system in Kosovo (e.g., which high schools give access to further continuation; in which cases the final exam is not obligatory, etc. This database would be published in NARIC's website and would serve 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. (For this, there should be a form/example used by other countries).



## **Lack of staff**

Lack of staff or human resources, according to these officials, has hindered the timely review of cases, because of the large amount of cases.

So, it is proposed that this center should have support with professional staff for periods of time (hiring an expert with relevant experience in Higher Education); and to develop the component of academic informing through trainings (needs must be specified in the meantime).

## **Special law**

A special law that regulates the work of NARIC is proposed, since according to the new MEST regulation, NARIC is not part of the Higher Education and that the scope of this center is too broad, since it includes pre-university education as well.

As a result of a lack of a special law, the Appeals Court has ordered MEST, and SCR, to implement its decision to recognize a PhD diploma.

The decision for recognizing this diploma was signed by SCR, but through the State Lawyer, SCR/NARIC has complained in the Supreme Court, since the decision to not recognize that diploma was grounded.

The court order to recognize that PhD diploma applies only to this case and cannot be used by other candidates in similar cases.

## **Regulation for the State Council for Recognitions**

Compiling a regulation for the work of the State Council for Recognitions (SCR), through which the work of this council would be established, such as the way to call meetings, organizing them, decision making or voting for cases, implementing decisions and other issues.

## **Suspended cases from the higher education institutions in Albania**

Another challenge of NARIC KOSOVA is the recognition of diplomas from Albania.

Contradictory answers for diplomas obtained from private universities in Albania, or changing the answer from negative to positive without a grounded reason, continues to challenge SCR's process of recognizing those diplomas.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in Kosovo (MEST) and the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth in Albania (MESY), have agreed that the diploma recognition process will be done through a document, used by both countries.

In cases when the diploma fulfills all conditions for recognition according to legislation in power, in one of the boxes of the document submitted by MESY it would say *"This diploma is valid in the Republic of Albania"*, while according to NARIC, Albania has changed the form unilaterally, where it now says *"This diploma is valid in the Republic of Albania"*, and added a section *"Remarks"*, where it says *"MESY is not responsible for the validity of the data given in this form"*.

According to NARIC, there were cases for which the Albanian Ministry of Education gave a negative response a year ago, and then changed it a year later to positive, to recognize the diploma.

This happened because these students were offered by the institution where they finished their studies to change the date of the graduation without extra exams.



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