

ERASMUS+ PROJECT 2023-1-RS01-KA220-HED-000156660

EPIR | E-Procedure of Institutional Recognition of Foreign Higher Education Documents

WORK PACKAGE 2

TASK 2.1. IN-DEPTH ANALYSES OF EXISTING REGULATORY INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS, AND EU STANDARDS AND POLICIES

The Qualifications Agency was established by the Government of the Republic of Serbia on September 7, 2018, with the adoption of the Decision on the Establishment of the Qualifications Agency ("Official Gazette of the RS" No. 68/2018). The decision was made based on article 14 paragraph 1 of the Law on the National Framework of Qualifications of the Republic of Serbia ("Official Gazette of the RS", no. 27/2018, 6/2020, 129/2021 - other laws and 76/2023), Article 9 of the Law on Public Agencies ("Official Gazette of RS", no. 18/05, 81/05 - correction and 47/18) and Article 43, paragraph 1 of the Law on Government ("Official Gazette of RS", no. 55/05, 71/05 - correction, 101/07, 65/08, 16/11, 68/12 - US, 72/12, 7/14 - US, 44/14 and 30/18 - other laws). The aforementioned decision entered into force on the eighth day from the day of its publication in the "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", that is, on September 15, 2018.

JURISDICTION AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Providing expertise and professional support in the process of developing qualifications and ensuring quality in the implementation of the National Qualifications Framework of the Republic of Serbia and connecting the qualifications system with the European Qualifications Framework.

Main tasks:

- Assessment of initiatives for the introduction of new qualifications
- Provision of expertise and administrative-technical support to sector skills councils (SSC), and development of proposals for qualification standards
- Management of the NQFS Register according to the The National Qualifications Classification System (CLASSNQFS), aligned with the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 13-F)
- Recognition of foreign school qualifications and professional recognition (ENIC/NARIC Center)
- Accreditation of providers in non-formal AE (PROAEA)
- External evaluation of PROAEA

EPIR project partners:



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Qualifications Agency

- Monitoring the measures and effects of the implementation of (new) qualifications on employment and lifelong learning
- Preparation of developmental projects, analysis and research of importance for the development of qualifications

ENIC/NARIC - center The ENIC/NARIC center is an organizational unit of the The Qualifications Agency that implements the process of recognition of foreign school documents. The procedure for recognizing a foreign school document is carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Law on the National Framework of Qualifications of the Republic of Serbia ("Sl glasnik RS", no. 27/18 and 6/20 129/21 – др. закон и 76/23), unless otherwise stipulated by an international agreement.

The ENIC/NARIC Centre, being an organisational unit of the Qualifications Agency implements the following:

- procedure for the recognition of foreign primary school and secondary school documents,
- and the procedure for the recognition of foreign higher education documents for the purpose of employment – professional recognition.

The recognition of a foreign school document is the procedure whereby a qualification acquired abroad is equated to the corresponding, relevant public document of the Republic of Serbia. Following the recognition of a foreign primary school and elementary school document, a person acquires the right to continue education or the right to employment.

Purpose of recognition:

- Academic recognition - recognition for continuing education - the procedure is carried out at higher education institutions.
- Professional recognition - recognition for employment - the procedure is carried out by the ENIC/NARIC center.

Education systems:

- Being familiar with educational systems-in order to evaluate foreign higher education documents we need not only to be familiar with education system of the issuing country, but also with educational system of our country in order to determine the level of foreign qualification.
- Evaluation of foreign study program must be quality assured.

Tools for recognition:

- Manuals on the recognition of higher education diplomas (e.g. EAR MANUAL)
- ENIC/NARIC network
- WHED database

RECOGNITION OF A FOREIGN HIGHER EDUCATION DOCUMENT FOR THE PUOSE OF EMPLOYMENT IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA RP

- By recognising the foreign higher education document, through the procedure of professional recognition, a person obtains the right to employment in the labor market of Republic of Serbia.
- Professional recognition is performed by the Qualifications Agency, i.e. the ENIC/NARIC Centre, following the evaluation of the foreign study programme, in accordance with the Law on NQFS and the law regulating higher education.

The Council of Europe has formed a network of information centers and improved cooperation among member states of the Council of Europe (EU and other European countries) in order to facilitate an easier and more secure process of recognizing higher education qualifications obtained from foreign higher education institutions for easier access to the labor market. The basis of cooperation is the trust that exists and is strengthened by better collaboration within the already established European Higher Education Area.

Mutual trust in recognized countries and their education systems, quality control, and accreditation system of higher education institutions and study programs enable faster flow of people, goods, and services, better connection of companies and businesses, adaptation to the labor market, business practices, and the implementation of new technologies. The initial basis is the verification of accreditation status in a recognized foreign country and trust in their quality control system. This facilitates the process and ensures fair treatment of holders of foreign qualifications who bring new quality to the existing labor market.

The European Higher Education Area is based on the principles of the Lisbon Convention and the reform of the higher education system (the so-called Bologna reform), making it easier to recognize qualifications acquired in another work system and employment, or the labor market. The higher education system has three levels: undergraduate, master's, and doctoral studies, and two types of study programs: academic and professional, which enables easier recognition and acceptance of qualifications. It is enough to determine the level of qualification and the field of study program attended, which is not always fully comparable to the domestic higher education system and labor market.

The acquired foreign qualification should be recognized in the original title, but the labor market in the Republic of Serbia is still not sufficiently prepared for this, requiring the addition of a title in the Serbian language and an exact designation in relation to the domestic qualification.

The situation in the healthcare sector is particularly rigid, where the system protecting existing staff in the healthcare system, as regulated professions, is sensitive to newcomers with foreign qualifications entering our labor market. The Law on the Recognition of Foreign Higher Education Qualifications (Law on the National Framework of Qualifications of the Republic of Serbia) determines that the director of The Qualifications Agency makes

a decision on professional recognition within 60 days from the date of receiving a complete application. The main novelty introduced by the Law is the possibility of issuing a decision without conducting an evaluation procedure of the foreign study program within 8 days if the higher education document is obtained from one of the top 500 universities ranked on one of the latest international university ranking lists in the world: Shanghai ranking consultancy, US News and World Report Ranking, or The Times Higher Education World University Rankings.

PROCEDURE OF RECOGNITION OF FOREIGN HIGHER EDUCATION DOCUMENTS FOR THE PURPOSE OF EMPLOYMENT – PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION

Professional recognition is carried out after the previously performed evaluation of the foreign study program in accordance with the Law on the National Framework of Qualifications of the Republic of Serbia and the law governing higher education.

The interested party submits the request for professional recognition to the Agency electronically on the Agency's portal through the eService:



<http://212.200.100.106:81/enicnaric/prijava/index.cfm>

This method enables a faster and easier submission of requests. You just need to follow the steps that guide you through the application.

If, however, the interested party is not able to submit a request this way, it is necessary to contact the ENIC/NARIC center on the phone: 011/3345-746 on weekdays from 12:00 to 14:00 or send an e-mail to the address: agencija@azk.gov.rs in order to schedule an appointment with the ENIC/NARIC center and provide the interested party with any needed clarification and to enable the electronic registration.

Before filling out the request, it is necessary to prepare the necessary documentation, which is scanned and then attached in pdf format.

Also, for the sake of easier recognition, it is best to assign the names of the scanned documents according to the name of the attached document, which is specified in the request.

The complete procedure for the professional recognition of foreign higher education documents consists of three steps:

- 1. FILLING OUT THE ELECTRONIC REQUEST;**
- 2. SUBMISSION OF NECESSARY DOCUMENTATION WITH THE COMPLETED ELECTRONIC REQUEST;**
- 3. PERSONAL DELIVERY OF DOCUMENTS WHEN RECEIVING THE DECISION ON THE RECOGNITION.**

EXPLANATION:

- The interested person first fills out the electronic request (mentioned in point 1), then attaches the scanned documentation and scanned proof of fee payment (mentioned in point 2).
- If the attached documentation is incomplete, the applicant will be informed of any necessary additions. The recognition process cannot be started until the documentation is complete.
- Upon completion of the procedure, the applicant will be contacted to receive the Decision on Recognition.
- When receiving the Decision on the recognition, the applicant comes to the Agency and submits:
 - completed, printed and signed electronic request (item 1),
 - the documentation listed in the NOTE section
- The attached documentation is not returned to the applicant and is permanently stored within the archives.

1. FILLING OUT THE ELECTRONIC REQUEST

The request form is an official document necessary to initiate the procedure for the recognition of a foreign higher education document.

The request form must be filled in, printed, signed and attached to the other documentation specified in point 2. The applicant is responsible for the accuracy of the information in the request with his signature. The recognition procedure cannot be started if the request is not correctly and completely filled out and signed.

2. SUBMISSION OF NECESSARY DOCUMENTATION WITH THE COMPLETED ELECTRONIC REQUEST

The following documents must be submitted with the request (scanned in pdf format) :

1. Original diploma

The original diploma must be certified with an APOSTIL stamp in the country where the higher education certificate was obtained.

Certification of the original diploma with an APOSTIL seal is not required if the diploma was obtained in countries with which the Republic of Serbia has concluded bilateral agreements on the mutual release of public documents, namely: the Republic of Austria, the Kingdom of Belgium, the Republic of Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Bulgaria, the Republic of Greece, Republic of Cyprus, Hungary, Republic of North Macedonia, Mongolia, Republic of Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovak Republic, Ukraine, Republic of France, Republic of Croatia, Montenegro, Czech Republic and Republic of Slovenia.

For the signatory countries of the Hague Convention with which the Republic of Serbia has not concluded bilateral agreements on the mutual release of public documents, it is necessary to certify the original diploma with an APOSTIL stamp. You can access the list of countries that have signed the Hague Convention through the following link: <https://www.hcch.net/en/instruments/conventions/status-table/?cid=41>

For all other countries that are not signatories to the Hague Convention and that are not on the list of countries with which the Republic of Serbia has concluded bilateral agreements on the mutual exemption of public documents from legalization, full legalization of public documents is carried out. You can find out more about the process of legalization at this link: <https://www.mfa.gov.rs/gradjani/usluge/overa-dokumenata>

2. Original diploma supplement or exam transcript

The original diploma supplement or exam transcript contains the following information: passed exams with grades, official title and duration of the study program. If it is a doctorate degree that does not have a supplement to the degree or a transcript of the passed exams, it will not be submitted.

3. Serbian translations of documents under items 1 and 2 by an authorized court interpreter .

It is not necessary to submit translations of foreign higher education documents from the following countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic

of Croatia and Montenegro. Instead of translating the documents, the certified copies should be scanned and attached to the electronic application. If the original diploma was issued bilingually, it does not matter from which language it is translated.

4. Previously obtained higher education certificates (diplomas)

If there exist - attach the diploma and the diploma supplement or the transcript of the exam in case there is no diploma supplement. If the applicant previously obtained a higher education certificate abroad, it is necessary to attach a certified translation of the said documents. In the event that the previously acquired foreign higher education document has already been recognized at universities in the Republic of Serbia or at the Serbian ENIC/NARIC center, submit the Decision on Recognition instead of the diploma and diploma supplement or transcript of the examination of previous studies.

5. ID or passport copy

6. Decision of the competent authority or a copy of the marriage certificate

If the applicant has changed his/her name and/or surname and has different surnames in the submitted documentation, it is necessary to attach the decision of the competent authority, a copy of the marriage certificate or any other document that proves that the applicant has changed his/her name and/or surname.

7. A short biography in either Serbian or English, from which the course of education must be seen. A resume is also possible.

8. For the recognition of doctoral studies it is necessary to attach the doctoral dissertation in the original language in electronic form.

The doctoral dissertation can be submitted by specifying the link on which it is located, i.e. by submitting it in electronic form.

The extended abstract of the dissertation (in Serbian or English) is submitted in electronic form.

When recognizing doctoral studies, it is necessary to provide a list of published scientific works and where they were published.

9. Submission of proof of payment of the procedure costs

The fee for one request for the issuance of a decision on the recognition of a foreign higher education document for the purpose of employment is charged based on Article 3, paragraph 3 of the Rulebook on the amount of the fee for public services provided by the Qualifications Agency.

When paying the mentioned fee, if the payer is not the applicant at the same

time, i.e. the payment is being made for another person, it is mandatory to state the name and surname of the person who will be the user of the services of the Qualifications Agency, i.e. on whose behalf the payment is being made.

NOTE:

When receiving the Decision on Recognition, the applicant is obliged to submit: A completed, printed and signed electronic application, the original diploma and diploma supplement or examination transcript for inspection (a certified copy is not the same as the original document) and one of the following:

1) In the case when the diploma, which is in the process of recognition, has been translated in the Serbian language:

Translation of the diploma and the diploma supplement or the exam transcript with a copy of the original certified by a court interpreter.

2) In the case when the diploma, which is in the process of recognition, is from countries from which translation is not required (Bosnia and Montenegro, Republic of Croatia and Montenegro):

A certified copy of the diploma and diploma supplement or transcript of the same exam.

If it is a doctoral diploma, which has neither a supplement to the diploma nor a transcript of the exam, they will not be submitted. Holders of a doctoral degree must also bring a physical copy of the doctoral thesis. Submission of the doctoral thesis can be in printed format, on flash drive or CD.

CERTIFICATION AND TRANSLATION OF DOCUMENTS:

- The translation into Serbian is performed and certified by an authorized court interpreter in the Republic of Serbia for the foreign language in which the foreign higher education certificate was issued. Copies of diplomas translated by a court interpreter do not need to be certified by a notary, if the court interpreter has certified the copy with his seal.
- The website of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Serbia contains a list of authorized court interpreters.
- Also, you can take a look at the Rulebook on the List of Professional, Academic and Scientific Titles.
- Copies of public documents in the Republic of Serbia are certified by a notary public (list of notary public offices).

1. PERSONAL DELIVERY OF DOCUMENTS WHEN RECEIVING THE DECISION ON THE RECOGNITION

If the request is incomplete or one of the pdf files is incorrect, the applicant will receive a notification to complete it.

The deadline for drafting the Decision by the Agency is 60 (sixty) days from the date of the reception of the request with complete documentation. If the higher education certificate was obtained at one of the 500 universities ranked in one of the most recently published international rankings of universities in the world by Shanghai ranking consultancy (Shanghai List), US News and World Report Ranking (US News and World Report rating list) or The Times Higher Education World University Rankings, the decision on professional recognition is made within 8 (eight) days from the day of the reception of the request with complete documentation. When the decision is made, the applicant will be notified electronically. The decision can be picked up within 30 (thirty) days from the day of receiving this notice, on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m..

If the applicant is not able to personally pick up the Decision on the recognition and submit the documentation, he is obliged to inform the ENIC/NARIC center, via email agencija@azk.gov.rs, which person will pick up the Decision and submit the necessary documents.

If the foreign higher education document whose recognition is requested was not issued in the Latin or the Cyrillic script (e.g. in Arabic, Chinese, Japanese and other scripts), it is necessary to ask the competent higher education institution to issue a new document in one of those two scripts.

If the applicant wishes to submit requests for different levels of study, it is necessary for the applicant to fill out a separate request for each level of study, submit separate documentation and pay a separate fee for the costs of the procedure. In the Agency's decision on diploma recognition, each level of higher education studies that was previously completed is specified, so it is not mandatory to submit a request for previously completed levels of studies. Therefore, this is done only if the applicant insists on the individual recognition of each higher education diploma he has obtained.

NOTE: The decision issued by the Qualifications Agency has the status of a public document and is final in the administrative procedure. For this reason, after picking up the Decision, we advise you to make a photocopy of the said Decision, have the copies certified by a public notary and hand them over to your employer, and keep the original with you.

SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS: Online application for recognition and communication with candidates. Precise instructions on website.

WEAKNESSES: Not a completely digitalized procedure. Candidates still have to come physically to get their final recognition document (decision on the recognition) and present original document. (scanned document is not considered an original)

When it comes to inadequate awareness and information of the applicant regarding electronic application, it is important to provide additional resources and support to facilitate understanding of the electronic application process. This may include additional training, step-by-step instructions, or even direct support via phone or email. It is important to ensure that the applicant is sufficiently informed and supported during this process in order to successfully complete it.

OPPORTUNITIES: Procedure can be fully digitalized which procedure have to be harmonized with national legislative. We know this from experience with other ENIC/NARIC centres.

THREATS: Bad regulations which force us to use outdated methods of work.

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