

REPORT¹

ON THE RECOGNITION OF DIPLOMAS AND STUDY PROGRAMS

THE NATIONAL PLAN FOR DIPLOMA RECOGNITION²

LEGISLATION

1.1 LISBON RECOGNITION CONVENTION

The Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Diplomas was signed on 04.11.1999 and was ratified by the Albanian Parliament on 06.03.2002, taking effect on 01.05.2002.

1.2 REVIEW OF THE NATIONAL LEGISLATION RELEVANT TO RECOGNITION

The table³ presents the laws and the by-laws pursuant to the fundamental principles of Lisbon Convention.

After 2005, based on the proposal of the Ministry of Education and Science, the Council of Ministers issued the following regulations:

1. Regulation no. 187 on 29.03.2006 “An amendment to the Regulation of the Council of Minister no. 523 dated 01.08.2003 “On the recognition of the diplomas and certificates acquired in foreign higher schools”.

In order to facilitate the procedure, this regulation provides for direct recognition (without Ad-Hoc Commissions as provided by the former regulation) in cases of the bilateral or other agreements as well as in the cases when the same diploma from the same state has been once recognized by the Commission.

2. Regulation no. 186 dated 29.03.2006

“An amendment to the Regulation no. 786 dated 17.12.1998 of the Council of Ministers “On the post-university qualification and research and the classification of the teaching and research staff”.

¹ a. This report has been structured as requested by the model approved in Vienna by “Bologna Follow Up Group” on 07.04.2006. the headings and sub-headings are in English even for the Albanian material to avoid confusion during translation.

b) The report is associated with another material, reflecting the opinions of the workgroup members for the section of the diploma recognition in the law.

See Annex at the end

² The term “recognition will signify the recognition of diplomas, certificates and the study programs

³ See Annex at the end

After the introduction of the new university curricula, with the new structure of two cycles (3+2 or 4+1) at all our universities, which is also the case in most European universities, the “Master” diploma is recognized by the Ministry of Education.

3. The Ordinance of the Minister of Education no. 172 dated 15.05.2006 “For the establishment of the workgroup for the reform of the curricula and compliance with the Bologna Declaration system”

There is a sub-group, part of the above workgroup, in charge of the review of the recognition procedures and responsible for drafting the national plan to reform the recognition procedures.

4. Law no. 9576 dated 3.7.2006 (amendment of the Law no. 8461 dated 25.02.1999 “On the higher education in the Republic of Albania”.). This amendment provides for the introduction of a) the ECTS system and b) the Diploma Supplement at the first cycle.

1.3 BILATERAL OR REGIONAL RECOGNITION AGREEMENTS

1. “Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Albania and the Government of the Russian Federation on the reciprocal recognition of the school documents”. It was signed in Moscow in June 2000. The parties agree to recognize the high school certificates as equivalent in both countries, the equivalence of the diplomas of the higher education 3- or 4-year study programs as regards employment and advancement of studies. The diplomas of the 5-year study courses are recognized in both countries for employment on equal basis, as provided and specified in the diplomas, pursuant to the qualification acquired. There are provisions for the advanced post-university studies, leaving apart specialization in medicine. ()

2. Agreement between the Albanian Government and the Macedonian Government on the cooperation in education and science. The parties agree to recognize the high school, the higher school diplomas and the post-university studies (Master and Doctorate) as equivalent in both countries, as regards the advancement of studies and employment, pursuant to the qualification in the diplomas.

3. “Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Albania and the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria on the reciprocal recognition of the school documents and the academic grades and degrees.”, signed in Tirana on 26.03.2003, passed by the Council of Ministers on 13.11.2003. It provides for the direct recognition of the high school diplomas (general and professional), of the professional qualifications following high school, of the higher school diplomas and the doctorates.

4. “Agreement between the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania and the Council of Ministers of Bosnia Herzegovina on the cooperation in Education and Science” signed in Sarajevo on 15 April 2003. Article 9 provides for “the reciprocal recognition of the diplomas and the academic titles and grades, in compliance with the European Convention. The specific provisions for the reciprocal recognition will be in the special Agreement to be signed by the two parties”

5. “Agreement on cooperation between the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Albania and the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Ukraine on the cooperation in Education and Science” signed in Kiev on 27 May 2003. Article 8 provides for “the reciprocal recognition of the diplomas and the academic titles and grades in both countries, in compliance with the Lisbon Convention on 11 April 1997. The specific provisions for the reciprocal recognition will be in the special Agreement, to be signed by the two parties”

The above agreements are not limited in time but the incumbent authorities in both countries will exchange information of the changes in the national legislation, the study programs, the titles and the diplomas, through the ENIC/NARIC Network.

2. RECOGNITION PRACTICE

2.1 CRITERIA AND PROCEDURES

All Albanian nationals or foreigners can apply for the recognition of the diplomas and certificates acquired abroad to the following:

1. The Ministry of Education and Science, Department of Higher Education and Recognition of Diplomas, for the diplomas “Bachelor” as well as the “Master” diplomas when they have been successive extension of the Bachelor Degree at the same institution.
2. The Universities for the Master diplomas acquired abroad prior to the introduction of the new system (3+2 or 4+1) or when the Master degree has been acquired at a different institution (from the one where the Bachelor degree was acquired). The recognition procedure is administered by the Department covering that field and the recognition certificate is signed by the Rector.
3. The Commission for the Evaluation of the Academic Titles at the Ministry of Education and Science for the Doctor Degree, which as provided in the Albanian legal framework, is acquired after the completion of the 3-2 system or the completion of a 2-year study program following graduation (Bachelor). The Commission recognizes the Doctorate (PhD) done abroad The Recognition Certificate is signed by the Minister of Education and Science, who is also Chairman of the Commission.

The recognition of the diplomas and the certificates acquired abroad signifies the official recognition in the Republic of Albania, entitling their holders equal rights with regard to advancement of studies and employment.

The recognition is:

Direct if so provided in bilateral agreements

By equivalence if no there are no substantial differences;

Partial in case of such differences.

The Ministry of Education and Science has issued the regulations pursuant to the law and by-laws.

The Higher Institutions have the freedom to specify their requirements and the recognition procedures. They are not obliged to inform the Ministry of the procedures, the requirements or the results of the applications they proceed.

b&c In order to improve on the implementation of the “Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications”, a work group was established by the Ordinance of the Minister in January this year, including experts from the Ministry, the universities and the Civil Society. Based on the recommendations forwarded by this workgroup, the Ministry proposed certain amendments to the regulations to the Council of Ministers:

- Regulation no. 187 on 29.03.2006 “An amendment to the Regulation of the Council of Minister no. 523 dated 01.08.2003 “On the recognition of the diplomas and certificates acquired in foreign higher schools”.

- Regulation no. 186 dated 29.03.2006

“An amendment to the Regulation no. 786 dated 17.12.1998 of the Council of Ministers “On the post-university qualification and research and the classification of the teaching and research staff”.

The advantages were as follows:

1. The Ad-hoc Commissions became unnecessary provided that

1.1 there are bilateral agreements and

1.2 the same diploma from the same state has been previous recognized by an Ad-hoc Commission.

2. Applicants who had received recognition of a “Bachelor” degree were obliged to apply for the recognition of the Master degree, despite the fact that it was an uninterrupted extension of their Bachelor degree from the same Institution. The recognition of uninterrupted Master Degree courses was done by the Ministry, together with the recognition of the Bachelor Degree. This offered advantage in time and costs.

The applications take 90 days. There have been delays due to the delays in replies for the confirmation of the authenticity of the foreign diplomas from the foreign universities.

The Ministry is reviewing its procedures and regulations, particularly the documents required from the applicants.

Attaching special importance to the authenticity of the documents, the Ministry requires that all documents have to be legalized, which requires a certain cost and time from the applicants.

Relying on the “Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications”, we are aiming at reviewing the legal framework for the recognition process ⁴.

- by reducing the number of the documents which have to be legalized. Not all the documents should be necessarily legalized as there are other means offered by the modern technology which are faster and more reliable – the website, the e-mail correspondence with the foreign institutions, the ENIC/NARIC network etc.

⁴The new law is going to have specific provision for the recognition of diplomas

- the confirmation of the authenticity can be realized through the direct correspondence of the origin institution; in special cases for further verification, other requirements are in place, in compliance with the national laws and international conventions.
- the Applicant is entitled to appeal against a decision following formal refusal.
- the fees will be reduced by half
- the time limit will remain 3 months, but it will be aimed to be completed in two months' time.

2.2 JOINT DEGREES

At present, there are no legal provisions for the recognition of the Joint Degrees, Double Degrees or Multiple ones.

One of the private universities in Tirana applies a few study programs with Italian universities – Joint Degrees:

in medicine, dentistry, physio-therapy, and nursing (Tor Vergata University – Rome);

Pharmacy (University of Milan);

Economics, business administration, political science and international relations (Bari University).

2.3 OVERVIEW OF INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICE

The incumbent authorities in the Republic of Albania are:

The Commission of the Evaluation of Academic Titles at the Ministry of Education and Science;

The Department of Higher Education and Recognition of Diplomas

Universities.

These institutions are independent from each-other having no obligation to exchange information. There is no centralized register.

2.5 BORDERLESS/TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATION

the Law no. 9576 dated 3.7.2006, which is an amendment to the Law no. 8461 dated 25.02.1999 “On Higher Education”, provides for the introduction and establishment of the ECTS system and the new university structure 3+2, which becomes obligatory (Article 5).

“..the first cycle of studies lasts no less than 3 academic years with a load no less than 60 credits per year. The second cycle which follows the first, lasts 1-2 years with a load no less than 60 credits per year.”

The implementation of the above system started in the academic year 2005-2006, pursuant to earlier by-laws.

the same law and article mentioned above provides for obligatory issuance with Diploma Supplement for Bachelor Degree. Earlier to that there was an Ordinance of the Minister too and national workshops were organized to train and instruct about its implementation, but it has not so far been applied.

The Ministry considers the ECTS system and the Diploma Supplement as fundamental elements to guarantee the transparency in the recognition process and, in cooperation with the universities

are in the course of preparing the implementation plan for “Diploma Supplement”, to start in the academic year 2007-2008. The graduates in the year 2006-2007 will be issued the Diploma Supplement in Albanian and English, but it will be issued to students who request it. The Diploma Supplement has been based on the model of the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO. All the higher schools in Albania will have a unified model.

c. In order to improve the transparency, work will continue with :

1. the publication of the “Student’s Guide” in all the higher schools every two years at least, with the academic plans and programs for each study course, associated with the ECTS.
2. the establishment of the web-site for all higher schools.

The Albanian Higher Institutions and the Ministry have encouraged and actively participated the introduction of the post-university transnational qualification (mainly at Master Degree), in cooperation with various foreign institutions or networks.

3. INFORMATION PROVISION

3.1 PROVISION OF INFORMATION ON RECOGNITION

The Ministry’s website⁵ has a certain site for the Recognition of diplomas “Njohja e Diplomave”, which offers the law and the by-laws, the recognition procedures, instructions on applications as well as the list of applicants whose recognition has been finished. There is information on the ENIC/NARIC website (<http://www.enic-naric.net/>; Albania, National Information Center, which has not been updated since 2004.

The Universities have not created such a website for the foreign “Master” Diploma they recognize. The same is true for the Commission of the Evaluation of the Academic Titles. (responsible for the recognition of PhD acquired abroad.)

b. The website will have been finished by the end of 2007.

c. The responsible institutions will be the Universities and the Ministry.

d&e After the establishment of the website of the responsible institutions, the said sites will be linked to ENIC/NARIC website.

INFORMATION PACKAGE FOR APPLICANTS

The Ministry’s diploma recognition website will be applied to other institutions, responsible for recognition of diplomas and will be linked to (<http://www.mash.gov.al/>

4. STRUCTURES

4.1 NATIONAL INFORMATION CENTER

⁵ <http://www.mash.gov.al/struktura/njohja%20e%20diplomave.html>

- a) The ENIC/NARIC center – “The National Information Center” is part of the Department of the Higher Education and Recognition of Diplomas. One of the staff in this Department is actually doing the job.
- b) The Department of the Higher Education and Recognition of Diplomas has decision-making but the Decision is actually taken by the Deputy Minister who signs the recognition certificate. There is no actual difference between the academic and the professional recognition.
- c) Only one of the staff of the Department of the Higher Education and Recognition of Diplomas is in charge of diploma recognition. He cooperates with the Higher Education Institutions and is a member of the Ad-hoc Commissions. The new structure of the Ministry, which will be introduced in early 2007, provides for a 3-member staff for the recognition of diplomas. There is no separate budget.
- d) the staff has not any special qualifications.
- e) The cooperation at national level is realized through having the University professors in the Recognition Ad-Hoc Commissions. At international level, there is exchange of information for confirmation of authenticity of the documents.

4.2 COOPERATION RECOGNITION/QUALITY ASSURANCE BODIES

There is no official exchange of information between the recognition and the QA bodies.

Tirana on 11.12.2006