

**AGREEMENT ON COOPERATION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS
IN THE FIELD OF MUTUAL RECOGNITION OF DIPLOMAS AND SCIENTIFIC
GRADES ISSUED BY HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND OTHER
AUTHORIZED INSTITUTIONS**

We, the Western Balkan participants, referred to collectively as “the Contracting Parties” and individually “the Contracting Party”,

Driven by the desire and need to promote productive cooperation in the field of mutual recognition of diplomas and scientific grades issued by higher education institutions and other authorized institutions,

Respecting the domestic legislation in force in the Contracting Parties and the principles and international standards of recognition of qualifications as defined in international documents, agreements, and conventions,

Considering the similar values and interests, as well as the need for cooperation in the field of mutual recognition of diplomas, based on equality and mutual benefit,

Inviting the other Western Balkan participants to join this agreement in the spirit of inclusiveness and regional cooperation and with a view to promote productive cooperation in the field of mutual recognition of diplomas and certificates within region,

Have agreed as follows:

**Article 1
Purpose and definitions**

The purpose of this Agreement is to facilitate institutional cooperation in the field of recognition of diplomas and scientific degrees of higher education obtained in the Contracting Parties, between the ENIC/NARIC offices, in order to facilitate the recognition procedures.

The term "diploma" means the final document issued by institutions of higher education, and other institutions authorized under the legislation in force in each Contracting Party that proves the successful completion of a study program or the attainment of a qualification pertaining to level 5, when applicable in one of the Contracting Parties, and levels 6 to 8 of the European Qualifications Framework, regardless of the name of the document.

The term "scientific degree" means the qualification "Doctor", which proves the successful completion of a study program or the achievement of a qualification that belongs to level 8 according to the European Qualifications Framework.

Article 2

Responsible institutions

The institution responsible in the Republic of Albania for the recognition of diplomas obtained abroad (except the scientific degree "Doctor") is the Educational Services' Center (ESC) under the Ministry of Education and Sports of the Republic of Albania. The institution responsible for the recognition in the Republic of Albania of the scientific degree "Doctor" obtained abroad is the Ministry of Education and Sports. The technical secretariat for this service is located near the Center for Educational Services.

The institution responsible for the recognition in the Republic of Serbia is Qualifications Agency (ENIC/NARIC Centre) for professional recognition (for the purpose of employment) and accredited higher education institutions in the Republic of Serbia for the academic recognition (for the purpose of continuing studies).

The institution responsible for the recognition in the Republic of North Macedonia is Ministry of Education and Science - Unit for recognition of foreign diploma qualification.

Article 3

Methods of cooperation

Institutional cooperation in the field of mutual recognition of diplomas and scientific degrees issued by higher education institutions will be realized through:

- a. Cooperation in facilitating the recognition of diplomas and scientific degrees of higher education obtained in the Contracting Parties.
- b. Shortening the mutual deadlines for the procedures of recognition of diplomas and scientific degrees of higher education, obtained in the Contracting Parties.

Article 4

Facilitation of procedures and deadlines

- a. For diplomas issued by accredited higher education institutions equipped with an Apostille stamp, the responsible institutions proceed directly with the recognition, without the need for e-mail verification of the authenticity of the diploma. Exceptionally, in cases where there is a reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the documentation, each Contracting Party reserves the right to request confirmation electronically from other Contracting Party.
- b. The deadline for confirmation of the authenticity of the diploma is 14 working days after the submission of the request by the other Party.
- c. The deadline for completing the process of recognition of the diploma is 20 working days, counting from the confirmation of the authenticity of the diploma or from its presentation with the Apostille stamp.

Article 5
Implementation of the Agreement

The co-operation provided for in this Agreement shall be implemented in accordance with the legislation in force in the Contracting Parties, as well as in accordance with the principles and international standards for the recognition of qualifications set forth in international instruments, agreements, and conventions of which the Contracting Parties are members.

Article 6
Dispute Settlement

Any dispute arising from the interpretation or application of this Agreement shall be settled through negotiations.

Article 7
Final and Transitional Provisions

The Republic of North Macedonia shall act as the Depositary of this Agreement.

The Agreement shall enter into force on the day of the last notification by which the Contracting Parties inform the Depositary that their internal procedures for the entry into force of the Agreement have been met.

The Agreement may be amended upon mutual consent of all Contracting Parties.

The Agreement shall remain in force indefinitely

Each Contracting Party may withdraw from this Agreement by notifying the Depositary, in written form, of its intention to withdraw. In such case, the Agreement shall cease to be in force for that Contracting Party on the 30th (thirtieth) day following the date of the receipt of the notice by the Depositary.

The original of this Agreement in a single copy in the English language shall be deposited with the Depositary which shall transmit a certified copy to each Contracting Party.

Done in Ohrid, on the eighth of June, two thousand twenty-two.

**For the Council of Ministers
of the Republic of Albania**

**For the Government of the
Republic of Serbia**

**For the Government of the
Republic of North
Macedonia**

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