

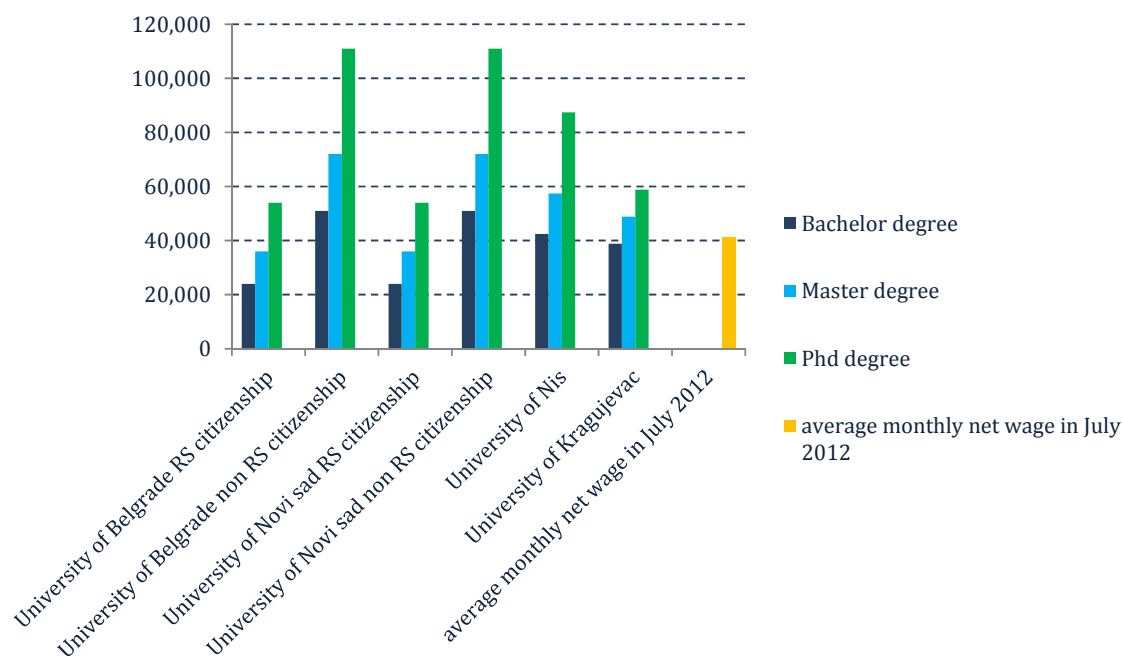
### Review of the foreign degrees nostrification process

Individuals pursue education in order to achieve various goals, in order to acquire knowledge, improve employment opportunities, earn higher income, pride, recognition or others. However, when an individual achieves a degree or certificate, the benefits he/she attains might also transfer to the groups he/she belongs to, family, friends, city or country. For countries, the benefits of educated population could be higher productivity, generation of wealth, but also advancement in culture, science, arts, medicine etc. Due to this fact, certain countries have enacted programs in order to support younger generation in their goal of attaining higher qualifications. Republic of Serbia has found a place among these countries, through the foundation of the Fund for Young Talents<sup>1</sup> which provides financial aid to students seeking to study at home or abroad. One of the main conditions for eligibility, for students seeking education in foreign countries, is however the conditions that these students should, upon completion of the course, return to their country and work for a certain number of years. However, one of the major problems has arisen for these students, the nostrification of the degrees attained at foreign institutions.

The nostrification process is a process through which degrees attained at educational institutions outside Serbia are recognised within Serbia, in order for the degrees to be eligible for employment or enrolment in order to pursue another certificate. Without a nostrified degree, individuals may be found ineligible for employment, their level of education will not be recognised in their „work book” (radna knjižica), they may not be awarded the appropriate amount of vacation days<sup>2</sup> etc.

The main obstacle facing students who intend to initiate the process of nostrification are the costs of the nostrification process. Graph 1 presents costs of nostrification process at major universities in Serbia, compared to the average net salary.

**Graph 1: Comparison of nostrification costs and average net salary (in RSD)**



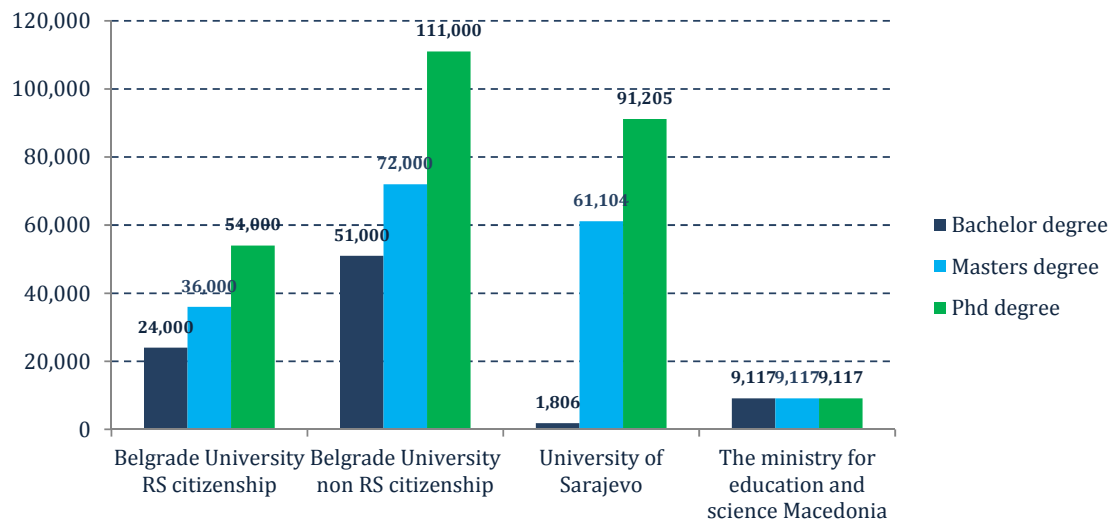
<sup>1</sup> <http://dositeja.fondmt.rs/>

<sup>2</sup> Vacation days may be increased for persons holding higher level degrees. See Republic of Serbia, Labor law, Official gazette of RS, No 54/09, article 69.

Data<sup>3</sup> presented in Graph 1 indicates that the costs of nostrification process participate in a significant amount within the average net salary (the participation ranges from 58.28% for bachelors degrees nostrified for RS citizens at Belgrade or Novi sad university to 269.55% for PhD degrees nostrified for non RS citizens at Belgrade or Novi sad university).

The costs of nostrification process in Serbia are somewhat comparable to the costs of the process in Bosnia and Herzegovina, however, they are significantly lower than in the Republic of Macedonia, as indicated in Graph 2<sup>4</sup>.

**Graph 2: Comparison of nostrification costs in Serbia and neighbouring countries (in RSD)**



The data presented in Graph 2 indicate that Serbia, compared to Macedonia, could improve its competitiveness in attracting students who have acquired degrees at foreign universities.

Information presented at Graphs 1 and 2 indicates that the costs of nostrification process in Serbia are considerable, compared to the national average salary, and furthermore, that there is an example of a neighbouring country that has enacted a more cost-competitive nostrification process. The high costs of nostrification, compared to average salary and neighbouring country, may in turn:

- Discourage students from returning to Serbia after the completion of their studies;
- Hamper employment, as students incur higher costs during the employment-seeking process;
- Lower productivity, as criteria other than efficiency, education and experience may prove decisive to the employers.

The high costs of nostrification may hamper mobility among the population seeking to find employment in Serbia, contrary to the practice in European Union. The EU countries have, in order to „implement the Lisbon Recognition Convention and, in general, to develop policy and practice for the recognition of qualifications, the

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.bg.ac.rs/csrf/obrazovanje/str\\_isprave.php](http://www.bg.ac.rs/csrf/obrazovanje/str_isprave.php); <http://www.ekof.bg.ac.rs/fakultet/nostrifikacija.php>; <http://www.uns.ac.rs/sr/>;

[http://www.ni.ac.rs/en/images/documents/obrazac\\_zahteva\\_za\\_priznavanje%20\\_sr\\_en\\_final.pdf](http://www.ni.ac.rs/en/images/documents/obrazac_zahteva_za_priznavanje%20_sr_en_final.pdf);

<http://www.kg.ac.rs/nostrifikacija.php>; <http://webzrzs.stat.gov.rs>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.unsa.ba/s/images/stories/web-unsanovi/pravni%20akti/prav/uputstvo-nostrifikacija.pdf>

<http://www.cbbh.ba/index.php?id=4&lang=sr>;

<http://www.mon.gov.mk/mk/dokumentimon/formularimon/216-2009-07-01-08-51-20>

middle exchange rate taken on 30.8.2012. <http://www.cbbh.ba/index.php?id=4&lang=sr>;

<http://www.nbrm.mk/?pmenu=kurslistMKIKL>; <http://www.nbs.rs/internet/cirilica/scripts/ondate.html>

Council of Europe and UNESCO have established the ENIC Network (European Network of National Information Centres on academic recognition and mobility). The Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES jointly provide the Secretariat for the ENIC Network. The ENIC Network cooperates closely with the NARIC Network of the European Union.

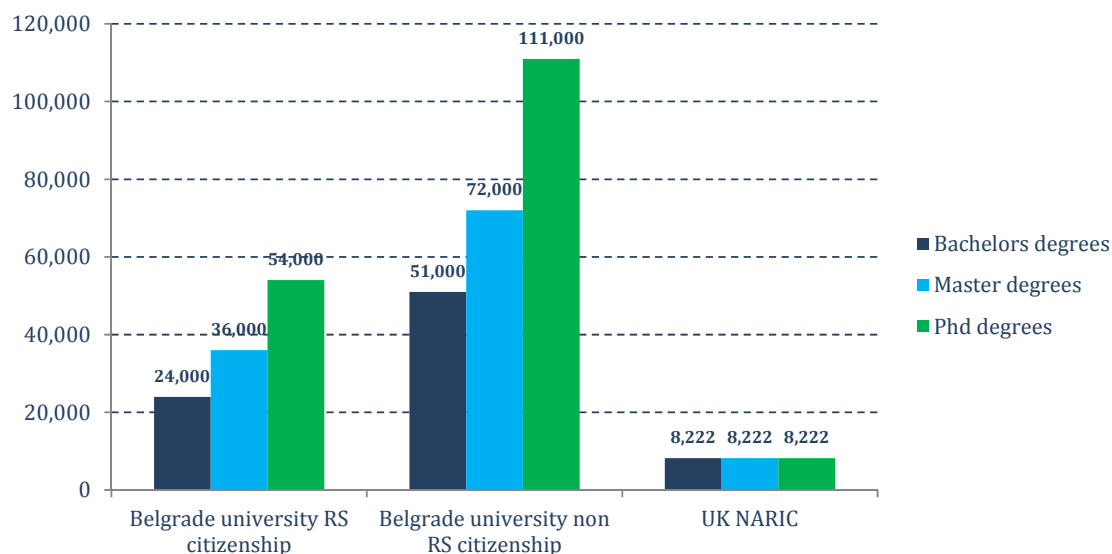
The Network is made up of the national information centres of the States party to the European Cultural Convention or the UNESCO Europe Region. An ENIC is a body set up by the national authorities. While the size and specific competence of ENIC may vary, they will generally provide information on:

- **the recognition of foreign diplomas, degrees and other qualifications;**
- education systems in both foreign countries and the ENIC's own country;

- opportunities for studying abroad, including information on loans and scholarships, as well as advice on practical questions related to mobility and equivalence". The NARIC network is an initiative of the European Commission and was created in 1984. **The network aims at improving academic recognition of diplomas and periods of study in the Member States of the European Union (EU) countries, the European Economic Area (EEA) countries and Turkey.** The network is part of the Community's Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP), which stimulates the mobility of students and staff between higher education institutions in these countries.....The **main users** of this service are higher education institutions, students and their advisers, parents, teachers and **prospective employers**.<sup>5</sup>

The corresponding agency, providing information and opinion regarding qualifications, within the UK, is the UK NARIC<sup>6</sup>. The services that the UK NARIC provides to individuals are the following: „UK NARIC provides comparison statements **for people with international qualifications planning to work or study in the UK. The statements can be used** by individuals to help them through the UK's immigration system, **applying for a UK job or to enrol on an education course**". Graph 3<sup>7</sup> compares the costs of nostrification process in Serbia and in UK.

**Graph 3: Comparison of nostrification costs in Serbia and UK (in RSD)**



<sup>5</sup> <http://www.enic-naric.net/index.aspx?s=n&r=g&d=about>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.ecctis.co.uk/naric/Who%20We%20Are.aspx>

<sup>7</sup> The costs at UK NARIC are lowered to 7.450 RSD for online applications.

<http://www.ecctis.co.uk/naric/Individuals/Default.aspx>; middle exchange rate on 30.8.2012.

<http://www.nbs.rs/internet/latinica/scripts/ondate.html>

The nostrification process in Serbia appears to include inefficiencies, compared to the process in the UK, not only regarding costs, but also time required for processing the request. While the process time in the UK is 15 working days<sup>8</sup>, the average time required to process the application for the Belgrade university is 50 days<sup>9</sup>, ranging from 3 days at the Faculty for physical education and sports to 138 at the Medical faculty.

As noted in Graphs 1-3, it appears that the nostrification process in Serbia suffers from cost inefficiencies, compared to the examples from region and EU. There are a number of options how the nostrification process could be improved.

The author of this review supports the option that the degrees from the top 100 universities from the Shanghai list<sup>10</sup> (and or any other world renown list of top universities), should be automatically recognized by the Government of the Republic of Serbia, without any additional costs or documentation, and that the costs should be lowered for qualifications from other universities. **Instead, these students should be required to provide 4 lectures, in the time span of 2 years after graduation, on the topic(s) that were included in their curriculum. The students should provide all of these lectures at the universities in Serbia<sup>11</sup>.** This in turn would:

- ✓ Liberalize the labour market in Serbia. It would decrease the hurdles faced by students with foreign degrees seeking employment in Serbia. Some of the main beneficiaries would be the alumni of the Fund for Young talents.
- ✓ Attract additional, highly educated, skilful workforce.
- ✓ Attract expatriates.
- ✓ Improve the demographic situation (Serbia has lost approximately 240.000 citizens between the censuses of 2002. and 2012)<sup>12</sup>.
- ✓ Attract people from other cultural background, which would promote diversity.
- ✓ **Enable the transfer of knowledge, skills and expertise and thus increase the competitiveness of the labour force in Serbia.**
- ✓ **Provide universities in Serbia with insight into the experience and practise of top world universities and increase their competitiveness.**

By

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.ecctis.co.uk/naric/Individuals/Default.aspx>

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.bg.ac.rs/csrp/obrazovanje/pdf/Statistika\\_priznavanja.pdf](http://www.bg.ac.rs/csrp/obrazovanje/pdf/Statistika_priznavanja.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.arwu.org/index.jsp>

<sup>11</sup> **The universities would be responsible for providing lecture halls and dates for the lecture, and stating clearly on their internet presentation available dates and lecture halls, while students would be responsible for choosing between 1 to 4 universities and dates available to give the lecture, and giving the lectures on the topics they have studied at the foreign universities. The Republic of Serbia would not be liable to pay any sum of money to the students, for giving the lecture, it would instruct public universities not to charge any sum of money to students for giving the lecture, but would not prohibit public or private universities for paying a certain amount to students, for the service of providing the lecture. After each lecture, the university would provide confirmation to the students, confirming the organized lecture and students would sign the confirmation for the university, confirming the organized lecture.**

<sup>12</sup> <http://webrzs.stat.gov.rs/WebSite/>