



# Recognition of Refugees' Diplomas in Brazil



## Introduction

One of the main challenges that hinders the integration of refugees is the difficult access to diploma recognition in order to practice the profession in which they received formal training. This report aims to present the topic in Brazil stemming from the project developed by NGO Compassiva, with the support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The project started in March 2016, following the growing demand of refugees in need of assistance throughout the diploma recognition process.

## The recognition of foreign diplomas in Brazil and the specificities of refugees

Foreign university degrees need to be revalidated by a public university in Brazil in order to be recognized in the country.

People in situation of asylum face many difficulties during this process. In the context of displacement, refugees—in order to save their lives or preserve their freedom—often cannot bring with them a series of documents commonly required by the universities.

The Brazilian Refugee Law (9.474/1997) recognizes specific guarantees for the protection and integration of refugees. According to article 1 of Law 9.474/1997, an individual shall be recognized as a refugee if due to well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, social group or political opinions, he or she is out of his or her country of nationality and cannot or does not wish to rely on the protection of such country. The national legislation also recognizes as refugees those who are displaced due to severe and generalized violation of human rights.

According to UNHCR's 2015 statistics, 65.3 million people were forced to move in search of protection. Of these, 21.3 million are refugees. About 9,000 were granted asylum in Brazil.

The Brazilian Refugee Law establishes the basic commitments of the Brazilian State towards the protection of refugees. The National Committee for Refugees (CONARE), a collegiate body presided by the Ministry of Justice, brings together representatives of government, civil society and UNHCR. The purpose of the Committee is (i) to analyze and decide on all asylum requests in Brazil, (ii) to formulate the national policy on asylum, and (iii) to create norms that clarify the terms of the refugee law.

In addition to providing basic rights to documentation and work, Law 9.474/1997 describes the need to facilitate the recognition of diplomas of refugees:

*Art. 44. Recognition of certificates and diplomas, the requirements for obtaining the condition of resident, and entrance in academic institutions of any level shall be facilitated, taken into consideration the unfavorable situation faced by the refugee.*

The Ministry of Education (MEC) regulates the recognition process for all diplomas issued abroad. MEC granted autonomy to Brazilian public universities to determine the conditions for

the recognition of undergraduate degrees. **In this sense, there is no standard procedure for such a process in Brazil.** In order to reduce disparities, the National Education Council and the Higher Education Chamber issued Resolution no. 3 on June 22, 2016, which enters into force in March 2017. This resolution brings uniformity to the process of diploma revalidation. The document establishes a maximum processing time, a list of documents to be requested by the universities, as well as the possibility of an exam to analyze the knowledge and skills of the student, among other measures.

### Case study: Compassiva's project

In consultations with the population of interest held throughout 2015, UNHCR identified the recognition of diplomas as a priority for refugees. Such a need is also pointed out by the report of the roundtable "[Building Communities of Practice for Urban Refugees](#)" promoted by UNHCR in Sao Paulo in June 2015. The event consulted a group of more than 200 participants, including municipal and state authorities and leaders of the refugee community.

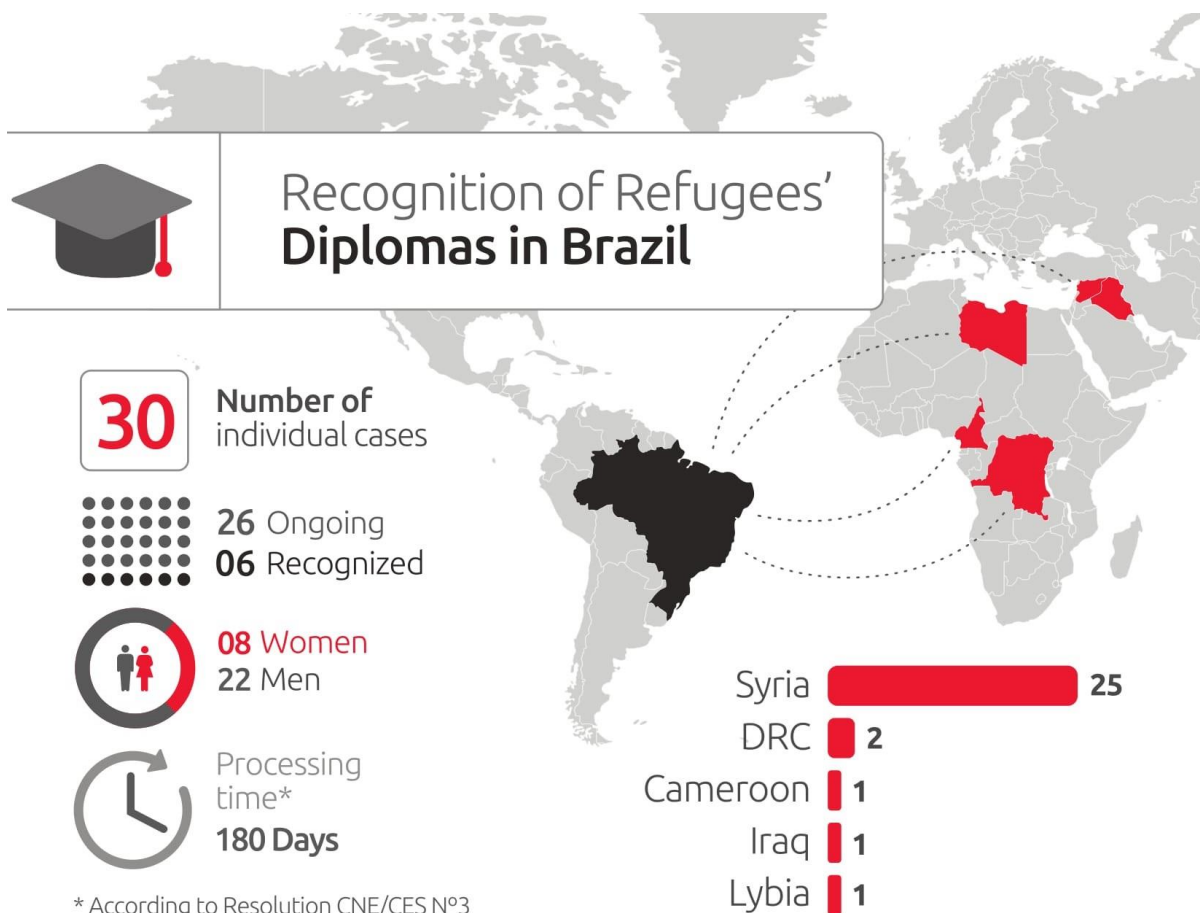
In response to this growing demand, UNHCR has supported [NGO Compassiva](#) since the beginning of 2016 in a project aimed at providing specific and systematic assistance to refugees who wish to revalidated their diplomas.

Since 2014, Compassiva, through its Refugee Assistance Program, has provided Portuguese classes to the Syrian community. The beneficiaries of the NGO possess a highly qualified professional profile. However, they have encountered many challenges to find jobs related to their profession in Brazil, considering that diploma recognition has been a requisite of most employers.

Therefore, the Diploma Recognition Project, in partnership with UNHCR, provides individual assistance for refugees who wish to have their diplomas recognized. A specialized team searches amongst the public universities with similar curriculum to the cases in hand, and then proceeds with the recognition request, payment of fees, and the necessary follow-ups.

In addition to legal support, the project provides for the possibility of financial assistance for the payment of high fees charged by universities in this process—a challenge identified in several participatory assessments.

Although recent, the project has already shown important results, such as the recognition of six refugee diplomas by the Federal Fluminense University (UFF), as well as the mapping of good practices and possible recommendations in the subject addressed in the sections below. These findings have been incorporated into UNHCR's advocacy strategy on education.



### Required courses

Engineering (7)

Computer Engineering (2)

Mechanics Engineering (2)

Civil Engineering (1)

Telecommunications Engineering (1)

Electric and Mechanics Engineering (1)

Pharmacy (4)

Architecture (2)

Computer Science (2)

Languages (2)

Odontology (2)

Accounting (1)

Biochemistry (1)

Biomedicine (1)

Chemistry (1)

Communication Science (1)

Information and Economics (1)

Law (1)

Pedagogy (1)

Sociology (1)

Veterinary (1)

## Best Practices and Recommendations

According to the 30 cases submitted to universities in 2016, the following practices have a positive impact on the issue of recognition of refugee diplomas in Brazil:

- **Fast-track process:** the possibility of starting the recognition process at any time, with no fixed deadline for the request, allows refugees to have a faster reintegration with diplomas revalidated through an accelerated process. The Resolution N. 03/2016 of the National Education Council, which will enter into force in March 2017, stipulates the maximum period of 180 (one hundred and eighty days) to process the case from the date of protocol.
- **Gratuity or low fees to initiate the case:** considering the compromise of the government of Brazil to protect and integrate refugees, it is recommended that universities exempt or reduces the payment of fees to initiate diploma recognition procedures. As an example of good practice, the Federal University of Paraná (UFPR), in the Ordinance 007/2014, admits exemption of the revalidation entry fee upon an analysis of the individual economic situation.
- **Raising awareness of personnel and focal points in universities on refugees' rights:** the existence of university reference points sensitized on refugees' rights facilitates the contact with the population of concern. Compassiva considers the close contact with sensitized focal points at Federal University of Fluminense (UFF) as a major key to speed up the recognition of six processes.
- **Alternatives to denial:** Individual analysis of the cases guarantees the right that refugees have his or her unfavorable situation considered. Universities, for example, have offered complementary courses and applying tests.
- **Alternatives to sworn translation,** e.g. translation done by representatives of the university's Language Courses. Some universities accept non-sworn translations from English, Spanish and French.
- **Adjustment to the new provisions of Resolution No. 3 (June 22, 2016) of the National Council of Education and Board of Higher Education,** which enters into force in March 2017, such as receipt of the application at any date, deadline to complete the process (180 days), and the prohibition of concomitant applications in more than one university.

## Examples of universities that paid special attention to refugees in their procedures for the recognition of foreign diplomas

Instituto Federal de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia da Paraíba (IFPB): [Res. 5/2010](#)  
Instituto Federal de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia de Santa Catarina (IFSC): [Res. 2/2012](#)  
Universidade de São Paulo (USP): [Resolução Nº 085/2012-CONSEPE](#) (\*)  
Universidade Federal de Viçosa (UFV): [Resolução Nº 2/2004](#)  
Universidade Federal de Uberlândia (UFU): [Resolução Nº 05/2012](#)  
Universidade Federal de Sergipe (UFS): [Resolução Nº 22/2009/CONSEPE](#)  
Universidade Federal de Pernambuco (UFPE): [Resolução nº 14/2008](#)  
Universidade Federal de Pelotas (UFPEl) [Resolução Nº 01/2003](#)  
Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo (UFES): [Resolução Nº 57/2005](#) (\*)  
Universidade Federal do Maranhão (UFMA): [Resolução Nº 355/2004](#)  
Universidade Federal do Paraná (UFPR): [Resolução Nº 02/2016](#) (\*)  
Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ): [Resolução CEG Nº 02/2005](#)  
Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN): [Resolução Nº 085/2012](#)  
Universidade Federal dos Vales do Jequitinhonha e Mucuri (UFVJM): [Resolução Nº 32/2009](#)  
Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG): [Edital PROGRAD 01/2015](#)  
Universidade Federal de Ouro Preto (UFOP): [Resolução Nº 203/1990](#)  
Universidade Federal de Santa Maria (UFSM): [Resolução Nº 05/2016](#) (\*)  
Universidade Federal Fluminense (UFF) [Resolução N 584/2013](#)  
(\*) Members of the Sérgio Vieira de Mello Academic Consortium, a partnership with UNHCR.

Universities interested in giving visibility to their specific procedures for the recognition of diplomas of refugees can contact the UNHCR: [csvm@unhcr.org](mailto:csvm@unhcr.org).