

**An increasing number of 'diploma supplements' issued by European universities are now starting to be seen in Australia and have begun to facilitate Australian recognition of European educational qualifications. Implementation of the Diploma Supplement across Europe is taking place under the *Lisbon Convention* and as part of the *Bologna Process*, which aims to establish the European Higher Education Area and to promote the European System of Higher Education world-wide. This paper examines the status of implementation of the Diploma Supplement by European higher education systems as at December 2005.**

### Background

The Diploma Supplement was jointly developed by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). Under the *Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region* (Lisbon Convention) all signatories are committed to promoting its widespread use.

The Diploma Supplement is a document attached to a higher education qualification (diploma/degree/certificate) aimed at improving international 'transparency' and facilitating the qualification's international recognition.

It is designed to provide a description of the nature, level, context, content and status of the studies that were successfully completed by the individual named on the original qualification to which this supplement is appended.

It is intended to ensure that the acquisition of knowledge and abilities will be readily understood in the context of mobility.

The communiqué of the Conference of Ministers responsible for Higher Education (Berlin September 2003), set the objective of ensuring that all graduating students receive this document automatically, free of charge and in a widely used European language, with effect from 2005.

This paper highlights key trends and features of how European countries had implemented the Diploma Supplement as at December 2005.

### Summary of Key Trends/Features

- **Widely Adopted**

By December 2005, over three-quarters of the 45 *Bologna Process* signatory countries had implemented fully or partly the Diploma Supplement, while most of the rest were planning to implement it.

Luxembourg and Malta were the only countries in which no date had yet been fixed for the Supplement to be implemented.

In 2005, 21 countries had the Diploma Supplement fully implemented by all their higher education institutions.

- **Legally or Administratively Required**

The majority (over four-fifths) of the countries using the Diploma Supplement introduced it by legislation/regulation or through ministerial orders/instructions.

By December 2005, the Diploma Supplement was already compulsory in 30 countries. Several other countries were considering making the Diploma Supplement a legal requirement.

Less than one-fifth of the countries operated the Diploma Supplement on a voluntary basis.

- **Issued Automatically**

The Diploma Supplement was automatically issued to students on their graduation as an integral part of their qualifications in nearly three-quarters of the countries adopting it.

In 2005, 16 countries automatically issued the Diploma Supplement in one language. Nine countries (Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Portugal, Serbia and Switzerland) automatically issued the Diploma Supplement in two languages.

Four countries (Andorra, Belgium, Hungary and Slovakia) automatically issued the Diploma Supplement in one language, and also provided the Diploma Supplement in another language on request.

Only seven countries (Albania, Bosnia, the Czech Republic, Holy See, Romania, Spain and Turkey) issued the Diploma Supplement only at a student's request.

- **Offered Free of Charge**

By December 2005, the Diploma Supplement was issued free of charge in nearly all of the countries adopting it, although some had not had the Diploma Supplement implemented by all of their higher education institutions.

In 2005, 22 countries issued the Diploma Supplement in one language free of charge and 13 countries offered the Diploma Supplement in two languages free of charge.

In two countries (Hungary and Slovakia) students had to pay for receiving the Diploma Supplement issued in more than one language.

Only in Italy could institutions decide whether to charge students for the Diploma Supplement or not.

- **Provided Bilingually**

In 2005, the majority of countries issued, or had the capacity to issue, the Diploma Supplement in more than one language. This was normally in English and in the language of instruction.

Some countries (Andorra, Belgium, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia) require the Diploma Supplement to be issued in the language of instruction plus one of the five EU official languages at students' request.

In the Czech Republic and Iceland, institutions have the discretion to determine whether the Diploma Supplement is issued in one language or two.

Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Norway and Sweden issued the Diploma Supplement only in English.

## Conclusion

This paper has highlighted the key trends and features of the implementation of the Diploma Supplement in Europe, namely:

- the Diploma Supplement is popular and has been widely adopted across Europe;
- it is to be implemented by the remaining *Bologna Process* signatory countries;
- most countries introduce the Diploma Supplement by legislation and/or Ministerial order;
- most countries issue the Diploma Supplement automatically to students on graduation;
- institutions in nearly all countries issue the Diploma Supplement free of charge; and
- the Diploma Supplement is commonly issued in two languages.

## Impact on Australia

An increasing number of Diploma Supplements issued by European universities are now starting to be seen in Australia. This has the potential to assist in the recognition of European qualifications in Australia.

Adoption of the Diploma Supplement by Australian universities could result in similar benefits, including:

- facilitating international transparency, recognition and mobility of Australian qualifications;
- promoting the Australian education system internationally; and
- fulfilling the expectations of graduating students, especially those from Europe.

DEST is continuing to assess the Australian environment in relation to the Diploma Supplement. Feedback provided by institutions and other stakeholders to the Department's discussion paper '*The Bologna Process and Australia: Next Steps*' will inform DEST's strategy in this regard.

## Further Information

The following websites contain detailed information about the implementation of the Diploma Supplement in Europe:

<http://www.eurydice.org/Documents/FocHE2005/en/FrameSet.htm>

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/nationalreport\\_en.html#national](http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/nationalreport_en.html#national)

<http://www.enic-naric.net/members.asp?country=Azerbaijan#Diploma%20Supplement%20Information>

If you have any questions/comments about this paper, or wish to have further information about the Diploma Supplement, please send your email to [tim.bryant@dest.gov.au](mailto:tim.bryant@dest.gov.au).

## Sources

European Commission, *Focus on the Structure of Higher Education in Europe, 2004/05 National Trends in the Bologna Process*, April 2005

European Commission, *Implementing the 'Education and Training 2010' Work Programme, 2005 Progress Reports*, December 2005

<http://www.enic-naric.net/members.asp?country>