2025-05-20

Diploma Supplement Spring Webinar 2025

Webinar report

Agenda

10:00 – 10:10 Opening and Welcome Words, Yolanda Brännström, Swedish Council for Higher Education

10:10 – 10:35 Union of Skills, Koen Nomden, European Commission

10:35 – 11:00 Diploma Supplement for Joint Programmes, Lotten Hultgren Viklund, Stockholm University

11:00 – 11:10 Break

11:00 – 11:20 Sub-chapter 6.1: Additional Information, Monica Wendel, Lund University

11:20 – 11:45 Using AI to Draft Learning Outcomes, Védís Grönvold, University of Iceland

11:55 – 12:00 Final Words and Closure, Susanna Kärki, The Finnish National Agency for Education

The notes below are an interpretation of the speakers' presentations. Please also refer to the published PPTs.

Opening and Welcome Words, Yolanda Brännström, Swedish Council for Higher Education

Yolanda describes the network as a space for sharing experiences and warmly invites everyone to join. You can find more information from the website: https://www.oph.fi/en/diploma-supplement-network

Union of Skills

Koen Nomden, European Commission

Koen Nomden from the European Commission presented the Union of Skills as an umbrella initiative for the education and the labor market sector. He emphasized the importance of **transparent, trusted, and portable qualifications** to support mobility within the EU single market.

The **Union of Skills** is a strategic initiative launched by the European Commission in March 2025 to address growing skills shortages and mismatches across Europe. These challenges are

driven by demographic shifts and rapid technological transformation. There is a lack of alignment between education systems and labor market needs—particularly in sectors like IT, healthcare, and green technologies. These challenges reflect the urgency of creating a more integrated and responsive European skills ecosystem.

The "Union of Skills" initiative aims to promote equality in access to skills development, support sustainable economic growth and enable seamless mobility across Europe.

For this to happen, countries and the EU need to

1. Build skills
   Among other initiatives there are the EU VET strategy (2026) and the already adopted STEM Education Strategic Plan.
2. Upskill and reskill (for the digital and green transition)
   There are initiatives on for example Skills Guarantees for workers and expanding the use of microcredentials.
3. Circulate skills
   Her you find initiatives such as Future oriented qualifications (a European degree label and a potential VET Diploma) and a Skills portability initiative.
4. Attract, develop and retain talent
   EU talent pool

Skills portability initiatives are for e.g.:

- Unregulated labor markets – focusing on tools like ESCO, EQF, and the European Digital Credentials for Learning (EDC).
- Modernization of recognition procedures for regulated professions – with a strong emphasis on digital transformation.
- Explore common rules for simpler recognition procedures of third country nationals

Digital Credentials and the EDC

The European Digital Credentials for Learning (EDC), launched in 2021, offers secure, verifiable, and portable digital proof of skills and qualifications. It is evolving to support storage in various digital wallets beyond Europass, in line with the eIDAS regulation. Work is ongoing to develop a dedicated EDC format for the Diploma Supplement, offering greater flexibility for institutions.

Reflections from the participants

1. *Integration with Bologna Process*

A key policy question was raised regarding the alignment of the Union of Skills with the European Higher Education Area (EHEA): *Is there any intention by the European Commission to further discuss the Union of Skills within the Bologna Follow-Up Groups (BFUG), particularly the Working Group on Internationalisation and Mobility?*

Commission Response: *Yes, the Commission will absolutely work on this.*

2. The Skills Portability Initiative also intersects with the Global Recognition Convention, particularly in the area of validation of prior learning. A suggestion was made to explore:
    - Simplified documentation for validation
    - Standardised elements in records to ease recognition
    - Better use of existing transparency tools to support informal and non-formal learning recognition

This would be especially beneficial for the validation community, enhancing mobility and recognition across diverse learning pathways.

Commission Response: *Yes, this is a topic to be further discussed in EQF-Europass contexts.*

Diploma Supplement for Joint Programmes

Lotten Hultgren Viklund, Stockholm University

Lotten begins with a rhetorical question about whether a joint programme degree requires a joint diploma supplement (DS). Based on the definitions of a joint versus a multiple degree, she concludes that a joint degree does require it. For a multiple degree, however, it is more uncertain whether it should be required.

It is therefore easier with a **multiple degree** if separate Diploma Supplements are issued, as each institution retains ownership of its own definition and can rely on the existing technical infrastructure used for degree certificates. However, it is still necessary to consider how the Diploma Supplement is handled.

If a **joint Diploma Supplement** is to be issued (for either a multiple or joint degree), several **challenges** arise. The first is that Diploma Supplements are not always designed according to the international template. Also, national regulations can complicate joint programme implementation. Furthermore, there may be other differences in how partner institutions wish to structure their DS—for example, in Sweden, completed courses are not included but instead they are attached as a separate list. It is also important to examine the technical infrastructure or whether one must rely on paper-based solutions.

Recommendations:

- Prepare early in the process and involve degree administrators (for a mutually agreed template) before the agreement is signed.
- Agree on terminology, utilize already existing information about the consortium, identify red lines, and draw inspiration from previous joint DS.
- **Use the International template for DS** and also **the ECA/JOQAR report**, it remains a valuable guide for those working with the Diploma Supplement in joint programmes, outlining essential information for recognition.

Sub-chapter 6.1: Additional Information

Monica Wendel, Lund University

Monica represents the central degree office, which serves nine faculties. The responsibility for the content of the Diploma Supplement (DS) has been delegated to the faculty boards, and the decision she presents today was made at the faculty level.

She describes how they have developed texts for section 6.1 of the DS and how they explored the extent to which these texts could be expanded, based on international templates and national guidelines. The core question was: *What do we want to communicate to the labor market about what the student can do? And further: How can we develop standard texts that are meaningful outside the university context?*

A key focus has been on how to make visible the competencies acquired outside the formal curriculum. The guiding principles are that the activities must be open to all students and may include study abroad, internships, and roles such as student union representative.

Monica presented the standard texts developed at Lund University for various categories of learning experiences identified. These texts aim to highlight competencies acquired outside the formal curriculum but within an organized framework. For details on the key terms and concepts they plan to use in individual Diploma Supplements (DS), please refer to Monica's presentation slides.

She emphasized that much of this work is about making students' broader skillsets visible to the labor market—something universities should take pride in supporting. While the DS is a highly technical document, it can also include more qualitative elements that reflect the student's broader competencies.

Monica welcomes further contact for those interested in their approach.

Reflections from the participants

A comment was raised regarding the legal interpretation of section 6.1—whether it should be used in this way or be limited strictly to formal qualifications. Susanna Kärki noted that there are clearly different interpretations of section 6.1, and that this is a topic worth discussing further within the network. Members of the network are also open to continued dialogue on this issue.

Using AI to Draft Learning Outcomes

Védís Grönvold, University of Iceland

Védís is working on improving teacher education. On this specific project she is working in collaboration with specialists from the School of Engineering and the School of Education.

The background to the project is a new regulatory framework that defines both generic and specific learning outcomes (LOs). The task was therefore to compare existing learning outcomes with the new regulations and identify what needed to be revised. Given the broad scope of the new regulations and the large number of programs affected, the team saw potential in using AI to support the process.

They began with a small-scale test, using AI to compare existing LOs with the new framework and to analyze whether they were aligned. Throughout the process, human expertise—particularly from teachers—remained central. Teachers were asked to evaluate the AI's conclusions and reasoning, and of course, they could disagree with the results.

For examples of the results, please refer to Védís' presentation slides.

Reflections from the participants

A question was raised about whether AI could also be used for admissions assessments, such as screening applicants. Védís found the idea interesting, although no such project is currently underway.

There will also be two new NARIC projects that will start soon on the practical use of AI for recognition of diplomas. One develops tools, the other is policy oriented. Furthermore, CIMEA (Italy) coordinates a project on AI and learning outcomes analysis.

Final Words and Closure

Susanna Kärki, The Finnish National Agency for Education

Susanna concluded by saying it was inspiring to see concrete examples from different universities and how much we can learn from one another. European initiatives and international cooperation strengthen the DS and make it more meaningful.

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