## Diploma Supplement: Possible areas of focus during the revision

The official Diploma Supplement (DS) model provided by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNIESCO/CEPES seems to be the basis for DS-documents we see daily. There are variations and some of them are significant. It seems difficult for some institutions (or some countries) to cover all requirements under each section as described by the *Diploma Supplement Explanatory Notes* and other relevant documents. Perhaps, there may be specified some obligatory points and some voluntary?

Other significant question is how the digitalization processes should reflect in the Diploma Supplement model? – DS in relation to the Groningen Declaration, national diploma databases etc. As known, the student data administration systems play a role in the production and perhaps some parts of the content of DS.

**Norway** has chosen to develop a common DS template (model) after a public hearing among the HEIs some years ago. The Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions (UHR) has **been** coordinating the work of a group of experts on the DS template. The HEIs are free to adjust the template and the information after their needs. We (NOKUT) are responsible for the text of Section 8 (Information on the national higher education system), which is to be used in all DS in Norway.

The common DS template for all higher education, including PhD, was recommended to the institutions in April 2012, with several updates lately, and can be found on the thematic pages on the UHRs website: <http://www.uhr.no/ressurser/temasider/vitnemal_og_vitnemalstillegg/vitnemal_og_vitnemalstillegg>

**Other possible areas of focus, which may be relevant to the work of the AG4:**

The most interesting are the changes regarding implementation of the qualification frameworks and including the learning outcomes in the DS, mentioned shortly to the end.

**1. Template and the technical**

**A common (national) template:** Would such layout be recommended? - It makes the technical easier, as well as it brings unification and generally higher quality of the document.

Having in mind the future diploma and perhaps DS databases – it may be important to have such unification, including unique document number. The common template will allow an easier future update.

**Format:** A4 format appears to be better than A3, as well as easier to adjust to the single programs and HEIs systems.

**2. Numbering under Section 8 (Information on the national higher education system)**

It may be useful for the graduates to have a description of the national education system from the period the education has been taken, which is well-structured and comprehensive.

I have seen several DS with numbering of subsections under Section 8. This may be confusing, because in the official international template all other undersections (1 to 7) have subsections. The content is pre-defined by the model on subsection level there. The only exception is Section 8.

Perhaps relevant to your work, here I copy the clarification received earlier as answer to my question from Cristina CAMAIANI (from the Education, Audiovisual & Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) / EC):

Indeed the respect of the DS template is very important and basically no changes in the titles and numbering of the various sections or sub-sections can be acceptable.

However, in the official DS template in section 8 there are not foreseen any sub-sections. Therefore, your proposal of using sub-numbering within section 8 would not change the template and we can agree with it if it helps to have a text more structured and comprehensive about the Norwegian education system.

We decided not to introduce numbering of the subsections in the Norwegian template of Section 8 this time. I see now that several national templates on the Europass’s thematic pages on DS have numbering under Section 8. Having in mined how strictly predefined is the content of the other DS sections, could it be better to introduce predefined subsections also under Section 8? Alternatively, to be recommended clearly not to introduce numbering of the subtitles there?

**3. DS for some specific studies**

- **DS for PhD**   
Use of ECTS for doctoral level seems not to be implemented in a number of countries. Additionally, it is still unusual to issue DS to the PhD graduates in more than half of the Bologna countries, as the survey provided via the ENIC-NARIC network shows.

There are furthermore other specifics of the DS for PhD: Study and research abroad are more common on this level. This part of the study taken abroad should come in the DS with the correct learning outcomes, grades and other similar information. In the cases HEIs are not giving ECTS there should be some way of measuring the doctoral students workload.

**- DS for joint degrees** – there have been mentioned difficulties to make a common transcript of records for the international joint degrees. Perhaps the BWG can come with some specific recommendations on DS for joint degrees, based among other on the work done lately by the Egracons (European Grade Conversion System) Project and the *Guidelines for Good Practice for Awarding Joint Degrees* (ECA, 2013) - <http://ecahe.eu/w/index.php/Guidelines_for_Good_Practice_for_Awarding_Joint_Degrees>

**- DS for one-year and two-year studies?**DS is to be issued only for completed degrees. - Does it mean that DS could be issued also for short-cycle studies?

- **DS used for non-higher education**: We have seen examples, lately from Moldova, where the official DS model has been used for secondary professional education.

**4. DS structure, content, other**

**- Learning outcomes** from the program at a whole should be copied by the HEIs under Section 4.2. of the DS model: How detailed should they be? It is still an exception to see them in the DS. In most cases, there is given a short version (few sentences) of the learning outcomes.

This part may be even more important in the future, when learning outcomes will be used more actively to support the understanding and recognition of qualifications.

- Format of the referencing to the qualifications frameworks and cycles: Is there need of concrete recommendations? - e.g. *First cycle, Level 6 NQF (EQF)* or other?

- Correlation to the new *ECTS Users Guide*?

- Grading system/scales should/could be given in DS; it is not often we have seen them.

- **Language variants for DS**: Most of our applicants have DS issues in English. It seems, for some countries this to be the main document (e.g. Hungary or Finland).   
We see as well as two separate language versions (e.g. Poland) and in some countries – a parallel version in two languages (e.g. Lithuania).

*The Diploma Supplement Explanatory Notes* mentions some information that should be given in the original language i.e. name of institution, title etc. May be good to remember to give them also in English or what is the language of the DS.

- HEIs (countries) could be more consequent in **references to authorization authorities** (Professional status) in Section 5 of DS.

- Is there need for some recommendations on possible **DS-monitoring strategies**? – I remember Malta had a post to the ENIC-NARIC that such strategy is to be implemented for their DS involving both HEIs and stakeholders.

- I enclose here an answer I have received via Europe Direct more recently, as the Diploma Suppliment is now under Erasmus+ program, perhaps relevant:

We have made it a condition in Erasmus+ that higher education institutions must issue a Diploma Supplement to all graduates in order to be awarded the **Erasmus Higher Education Charter** and thus take part in the programme.