

JOINT DECLARATION

Of

Mr Ján Figel'

Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth,
European Commission

And

The Hon Julie Bishop MP

Minister for Education, Science and Training,
Government of Australia

European Commission and the Government of Australia wish to reinforce co-operation in the fields of education and training.

European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, Mr Ján Figel', and Minister for Education, Science and Training, the Hon Julie Bishop, have today declared their willingness to further strengthen their co-operation by promoting policy dialogue and cooperation projects between higher education and vocational training institutions in the European Union and Australia. They made this declaration during the official visit of Commissioner Figel' to Australia which took place from 16 to 19 April 2007 at the invitation of Minister Bishop.

The European Commission and the Australian Government acknowledge the crucial contribution of education and training to the development of the global knowledge-based economy. Education and training are prerequisites for the effective functioning of the knowledge triangle (education - research - innovation) and play a key role in boosting growth and jobs. Co-operation in these fields is mutually beneficial as it allows both education and training systems to learn from successful experiences and to keep abreast of education developments around the world.

Commissioner Figel' and Minister Bishop recalled the intentions of the 1997 Joint Declaration of Relations between the European Union and Australia which stressed the importance of promoting better understanding and interaction between the peoples of the Member States of the EU and of Australia, including broader knowledge of their languages, cultures and institutions.

Commissioner Figel' and Minister Bishop confirmed their determination to build upon the existing partnership to meet the challenges of an increasingly interdependent world. Modernising higher education and ensuring high quality and attractive vocational education and training are instrumental in this respect. They welcomed the success of the projects developed so far following the 1997 Declaration. They noted also the interest of Australian higher education institutions in the European Bologna process of modernising the delivery of higher education and the introduction of tools such as the Diploma Supplement to secure better recognition of qualifications overseas.

Taking into account these positive developments, Commissioner Figel' and Minister Bishop jointly declared the following intentions:

- a. To promote the use of existing instruments and other forms of joint working in education and training as may be mutually determined, and in particular to support cooperation projects between higher education and vocational training institutions in the European Union and Australia.

Cooperation projects will in particular aim at:

- promoting and facilitating student and faculty mobility between recognised higher education (HE) institutions in the European Union and Australia;

- promoting and facilitating learner/trainee and trainer mobility between recognised vocational education and training (VET) institutions in the European Union and Australia;
 - promoting and encouraging cooperation and joint/shared curriculum development including recognition of credits between HE institutions and VET institutions in the European Union and Australia;
 - promoting the development of joint activities leading to the exploitation of information technology, especially the Internet, in the field of education and training;
 - facilitating the quality of student/learner and professional mobility by promoting transparent, mutual recognition of qualifications and periods of study and training, and where appropriate, portability of credits.
- b. To establish a policy dialogue on various issues of common interest in the fields of education and training. The policy dialogue will consist of exchanges of best practice, reviews of policy developments and challenges and promoting knowledge building and sharing on horizontal issues of interest for the European Union and Australia.

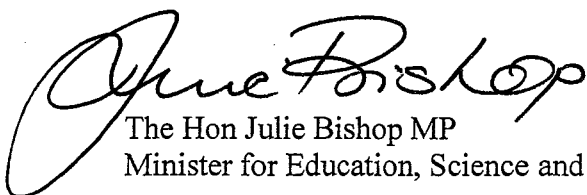
In the first stage, these exchanges might focus on issues such as:

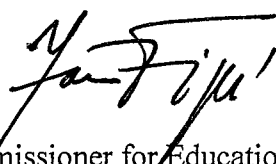
- the Bologna process;
- quality assurance in higher education and vocational education and training;
- HE and VET reforms;
- the establishment of indicators and benchmarking;
- indicator-based research on efficiency and equity of education systems;
- means of promoting the transferability of qualifications, including Qualifications Frameworks, and furthering the recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes.

The European Commission and the Australian Government may also facilitate the organisation of relevant specialised seminars or workshops and expert meetings.

The organisation and the determination of priorities for both categories described above will be mutually arranged by the European Commission's Directorate General for Education and Culture and the Department of Education, Science and Training of Australia.

This Joint Declaration is signed in Sydney on the eighteenth day of April 2007.


The Hon Julie Bishop MP
Minister for Education, Science and Training


Mr Ján Figel
European Commissioner for Education,
Training, Culture and Youth