



REPUBLIC OF CROATIA  
Ministry of Science  
and Education



MINISTRY  
OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE  
OF UKRAINE

## Background information on micro-credentials BFUG meeting, Kyiv, 4-5 March 2020

### Agenda Item 6 - Rome Ministerial Communiqué and Bologna Global Policy Statement

#### Higher education: a key role in continuous learning

A growing number of the population, with a higher education degree or lower, needs to update their knowledge and competences through more flexible alternative ways than full degrees, to fill the gap between their formal education and the fast-changing knowledge-development and labour market needs. Continuous learning through alternative credentials (certificates, digital badges, micro-credentials) can fill this knowledge and competences gap, increase the efficiency of the higher education system, encourage innovation in provision, and reach a more diverse group of learners, including mature students, learners with experience in the labor market.

Higher education institutions have a key role in providing these new flexible ways of learning and continuous learning opportunities, for example through more short term courses, delivered digitally and/or on site, and ensure an easier recognition and certification of this new expanded type of learning. This is not meant to replace full degrees, but to complement them, with new shorter formats better adapted to people on the labor market.

While the enhancement of lifelong and flexible learning has already been addressed in the previous Bologna communiqués, the aspect of recognition and certification of these shorter types of learning and training have not. And this is absolutely key for any further progress in this area.

#### Micro-credentials: state of play

The term micro-credentials encompasses two different aspects: **learning activities leading to a certification** and the **certification as such**. These can easily be reconciled as follows:

1. Micro-credentials represent **smaller units of learning**, developed in response to evolving professional and societal needs. Micro-credentials build on the already existing modular learning provision in institutions, by offering **short stand-alone courses**, targeted to all types of learners. In particular, learners whose primary focus is not to get a full degree, but to upskill and re-skill.
2. Micro-credentials are **awarded after the completion of short courses (or modules) and proper assessment of the acquired competences**. The short courses can be provided by higher education institutions as well as by different types of private entities as a quick response to labor market needs for specific competences.

At present, there are enormous **variations** - in terms of learning volume, level, quality standards, etc. - in the short courses leading to micro-credentials, which **make it most difficult to validate and recognise them**.

To further promote the take-up, recognition and validation of this new flexible way of continuous learning, **it would be beneficial to facilitate their alignment to the main structures, principles and tools of the EHEA**.

#### Next steps: concrete action for up-coming months

Micro-credentials are the topic of one of the selected projects in the 2019 Erasmus+ call – Key Action 3, EHEA implementation. The **MICROBOL (Micro-credentials linked to the Bologna key commitments) project**, coordinated by the Ministry of Education and Training of Belgium/Flemish Community, with partners from Finland, Italy, EUA and ENQA, is going to work with EHEA governments and stakeholders to explore, within the Bologna Process, whether and how existing Bologna tools can be used and/or need to be adapted to be fit for the micro-credentials. Three **working**

**groups will look at micro-credentials from the side of the three key commitments within the Bologna Process: Quality Assurance, Recognition, Qualification Frameworks and ECTS and will explore the feasibility of updating the related tools.**