

Micro-credentials in EHEA

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- Why micro-credentials, for who and by whom
- Use of EHEA tools
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- Issues for discussion

Introduction

- Overview of available documents:
 - EC expert group final report: A European Approach to Micro-credentials (2020), Towards a European Approach to Micro-credentials (2020)
 - OECD Working Paper. The Emergence of Alternative Credentials (2020)
 - Microbol project outputs (2020, 2021), <https://microcredentials.eu/>
- EC Open public consultation (2021) key stakeholders' statements (academic & world of work)
- Cases Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands

Definition

- **A micro-credential is a proof of the learning outcomes that a learner has acquired following a short learning experience. These learning outcomes have been assessed against transparent standards.**
- The proof is contained in a certified document that lists the name of the holder, the achieved learning outcomes, the assessment method, the awarding body and, where applicable, the qualifications framework level and the credits gained. Micro-credentials are owned by the learner, can be shared, are portable and may be combined into larger credentials or qualifications. They are underpinned by quality assurance following agreed standards.

EC proposal 2020

Definitions

A variety of definitions, aspects

- Mode of delivery, size, volume of work, accreditation, quality assurance standards
- Broad, flexible
- More general use across education sectors, life-long learning
- Learning outcomes
- Qualification
- Form of assessment
- Position within academic programme: Ex ante (embedded within programme) x ex post (recognised later by RPL)
- Learner's identity

Proposed EU standard (2020)

- Identification of the learner
- Title of the micro-credential
- Country/region of the issuer
- Awarding body
- Date of issuing
- Notional workload (ECTS)
- Level of learning experience (link to QF)
- Learning outcomes
- Form of participation /delivery
- Prerequisites
- Type of assessment
- Supervision and identity verification
- Quality assurance of credential & learning content

Objectives, target groups, providers

OBJECTIVES	TARGET GROUPS	PROVIDERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up-/reskilling • Specific learning/training • Addressing new groups of learners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced access to HE • New enrolments • Visibility of HEIs • Welcomed by majority of stakeholders • Changes of learning patterns, flexibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees of “partner” companies / organisations • Prospective students • Alumni • Current students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal education providers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universities/ HE institutions • VET schools • Private providers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large (multi-national) companies in house training • Private learning providers – business opportunity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link to HEIs (design, delivery, certification) • Independent

Use of transparency tools

- Transparency – EQF/NQF
 - QA
 - Credits for achievements (ECTS)
 - Recognition
 - RPL

 - LLL and career management
 - Digital form of Europass - Europass Digital Credentials Infrastructure (EDCI)
- A shared definition must be valid across sectors of education and the world of work, and it must mirror the societal mission of higher education institutions
 - EHEA existing tools suitable, open discussion on necessity of any adjustments
 - Use in other sectors?
 - Request to address complexity of flexible learning in HE (including various courses, short cycle HE...)

Qualifications Frameworks

Reports, documents

- Trends for HE flexibility
- Need for transparency – reference to EQF/NQF
 - Various views European x national
 - Issues of context of micro-credential for different purposes
- EC roadmap

Statements

- Substitution of formal qualifications (HE, VET)?
Stackability?
- Accommodating variety of national provisions
- Not heavy system, minimum requirements
- Voluntary submission to potential European micro-credential framework
- Engagement of all stakeholders' groups

Recognition, trust & quality assurance

Reports, documents

- Trust essential – transparency over quality and content
- ESG, ECTS – solid basis
 - Responsibility of HE institutions
 - Other providers?
 - Role of external agency?
- Trusted providers

Statements

- Concerns about focus on micro-credential quality in external QA within wider institutional context
- Engagement of all groups of stakeholders

Opportunities & challenges

Opportunities

- Great potential for enhanced, flexible learning, LLL, skills
- Strengthening links HE & VET & world of work & NGO sector
- Enhanced access to HE and LLL, serving communities
- Strong role of EC initiatives
- Flexible link of qualifications, badges, etc., portability

Challenges

- Clarification of micro-credentials & formal qualifications
- Complex approach to variety of flexible and short-cycle learning provisions using similar principles and tools (not only micro-credentials)
- Clear, relevant arrangements in regulatory, transparency tools – keep trust
- Harmonisation and coherence across EHEA

Issues for discussion

- Current state of national discussion on micro-credentials & their reflections in NQF; main drivers and issues raised in such discussion?
- Views on specific approaches to micro-credentials within the EHEA tools? Need for differentiation of approaches to different providers (HEIs x VET x non-formal ed. providers?)
- Priorities for capacity building, awareness raising, coherent & thorough implementation, both system & institutions? What are national plans?
- Views on main issues and actions preferred at European level? EU x EHEA

Thank you for attention

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