



Working group on Quality Assurance of micro-credentials

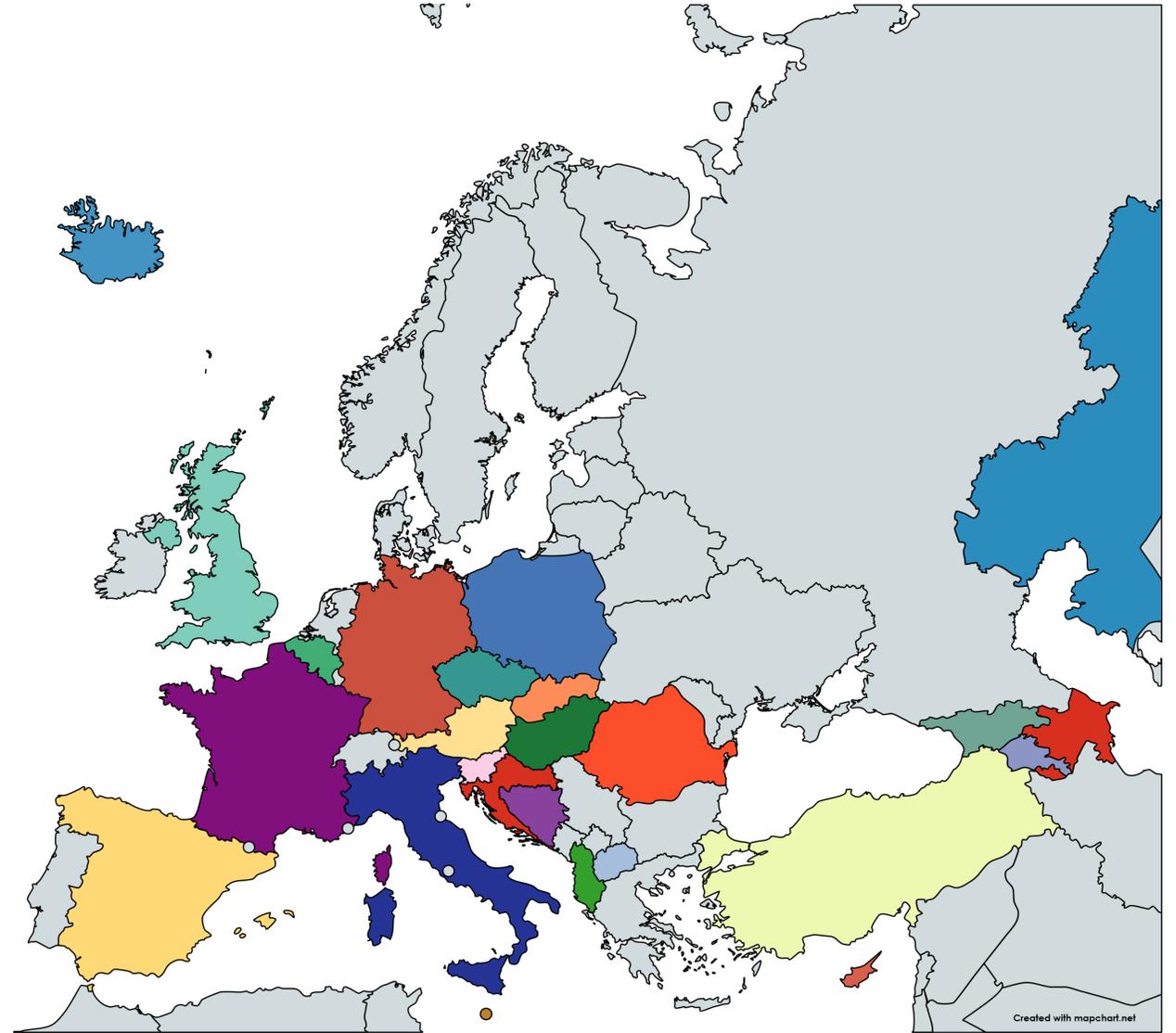
2 SEPTEMBER

I'MINQA

The WG

32 participants
25 EHEA countries

10 Ministry representatives
16 QA agency representatives
2 consultative members (EUA, ESU)
European Commission





Overview of the IMINQA project & presentation on the WG on QA of Micro-credentials

I'MINQA

Set up of Thematic Peer Group C on QA

2021-2024

- Chaired by 3 co-chairs: Belgium/Flemish Community, Romania and Kazakhstan
- 42 countries take part: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium/Flemish Community, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Holy See, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Romania, San Marino, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, UK – Scotland
- 7 organisations: EI-ETUCE, ENQA, EQAR, ESU, EUA, EURASHE, European Commission

Action plan of Thematic Peer Group C on QA

Thematic orientations

- Legislative framework in line with the ESG
- Internal quality assurance
- Enhancement-oriented use of the ESG
- The European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes
- Cross-border Quality Assurance

- Quality assurance of micro-credentials
- Quality assurance of European Universities
- Digitalisation of quality assurance processes

Umbrella project: Implementation and innovation in Quality Assurance through peer learning (IMINQA)

2022-2025 (3 years) -> approved

- Total budget: max. 500,000 euro
- Partners: Ministry of Education and Training (BE/FC), ARACIS (RO), ENQA, EQAR
- Third co-chair (KZ) involved as expert
- Other experts: 1 from EUA, 1 from Romania, 1 from Belgium

Umbrella project Thematic Peer Group C on QA: Implementation and innovation in Quality Assurance through peer learning (IMINQA)

2022-2025 (3 years) -> approved

- 7 WP's (6 content + 1 management)
 - Overall management -> start of project 1 May 2022
 - Organisation of TPG meetings (BE)
 - Staff mobility programme (BE)
 - 3 physical PLAs (EQAR)
 - 3 thematic WPs:
 - QA of Micro-credentials (ENQA)
 - QA of European Universities (BE)
 - Digitalisation of QA processes (RO)

Umbrella project Thematic Peer Group C on QA: Implementation and innovation in Quality Assurance through peer learning (IMINQA)

WP 5 Working group on QA of Micro-credentials

- Build further on the MICROBOL project
- Setup of a WG: to address the recommendations of the MICROBOL project related to internal and external quality assurance and on the establishment of a register and catalogues of providers and micro-credentials
- Links with:
 - ✓ WP2 (TPG C): the outcomes of the working group will be shared and discussed
 - ✓ WP3 (Staff mobility): one of the suggested topics for mobility is QA of micro-credentials
 - ✓ WP6 (QA of Eur. Univ.): several European University Alliances have created or are in the process of creating joint micro-credentials. These cases form important case studies for the WP5 activities, and QA experts from the alliances will be able to contribute

Umbrella project Thematic Peer Group C on QA: Implementation and innovation in Quality Assurance through peer learning (IMINQA)

WP 5 Working group on QA of Micro-credentials

Selection procedure:

- Maximum 30 participants, call for nomination of representatives through TPG
- Small survey (reason why joining, expertise, policy developments in own country, good practices, ...)
- Analysis of applications and selection of applicants indicating different levels of developments and different expertise are invited to the group
- **First meeting on 2 September 2022**

Umbrella project Thematic Peer Group C on QA: Implementation and innovation in Quality Assurance through peer learning (IMINQA)

WP 5 Working group on QA of Micro-credentials

- Desk research to collect and analyse different approaches to QA of micro-credentials
- Production of guiding documents on IQA of micro-credentials and the use of the ESG for micro-credential evaluation through institutional external QA approaches
 - ✓ For HEIs
 - ✓ For QA agencies
- Key Considerations for non-HEI providers

Umbrella project Thematic Peer Group C on QA: Implementation and innovation in Quality Assurance through peer learning (IMINQA)

WP 5 Working group on QA of Micro-credentials

- Inclusion of MC providers in DEQAR
- Feasibility assessment on quality label and recommendation on use of DEQAR
- Harmonised data standard for information on micro-credentials

=> Feeding the key outcomes of the WP into reporting to the 2024 EHEA Ministerial Conference and, as appropriate, into the 2024 Ministerial Communique.

Programme until lunch

09:30 Micro-credentials: presentation & plenary discussion on state of play and challenges in participating countries

10:15 Internal QA of micro-credentials: presentation and discussion in break-out groups

11:15 Health break

11:30 External QA of micro-credentials: presentation and discussion in break-out groups

Micro-credential – Definition

‘Micro-credential’ means the record of the learning outcomes that a learner has acquired following a small volume of learning. These learning outcomes will have been assessed against transparent and clearly defined criteria. Learning experiences leading to micro-credentials are designed to provide the learner with specific knowledge, skills and competences that respond to societal, personal, cultural or labour market needs. Micro-credentials are owned by the learner, can be shared and are portable. They may be stand-alone or combined into larger credentials. They are underpinned by quality assurance following agreed standards in the relevant sector or area of activity.’

<https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9237-2022-INIT/en/pdf>

European standard elements to describe a micro-credential

Mandatory elements:

- i) identification of the learner
- ii) title of the micro-credential
- iii) country(ies)/region(s) of the issuer
- iv) awarding body(ies)
- v) date of issuing
- vi) learning outcomes
- vii) notional workload needed to achieve the learning outcomes (in European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System – ECTS, wherever possible)
- viii) level (and cycle, if applicable) of the learning experience leading to the micro-credential (European Qualifications Framework, Qualifications Frameworks in the European Higher Education Area), if applicable
- ix) type of assessment
- x) form of participation in the learning activity
- xi) type of quality assurance used to underpin the micro-credential

<https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9237-2022-INIT/en/pdf>

European standard elements to describe a micro- credential

Optional elements, where relevant (nonexhaustive list):

- Prerequisites needed to enrol in the learning activity
- Supervision and identity verification during assessment (unsupervised with no identity verification, supervised with no identity verification, supervised online, or onsite with identity verification)
- Grade achieved
- Integration/stackability options (stand-alone, independent microcredential/integrated, stackable towards another credential)
- Further information

<https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9237-2022-INIT/en/pdf>

MICROBOL project main conclusions

The ESG → apply to all higher education offered in the EHEA, in whatever format, duration or mode of delivery

MICROBOL project main conclusions

National governments should explore whether a change in legislation is needed, and if this is the case:

- plan the relevant changes
- exchange information with other countries
- explore good practices and experiences at international level
- provide support to HEIs
- and consider institutional autonomy to allow for diversity and creativity

Support the development of a clear policy framework with transparent standards, while at the same time supporting the increased development of micro-credentials in cocreation with all stakeholders

MICROBOL project main conclusions

Support the development of a shared vision of what a micro-credential is

Design a set of "key considerations" for QA of micro-credentials.

Further explore in collaboration with alternative providers if and how QA procedures should be adapted for the provision of micro-credentials in partnerships

Further investigate employers' acceptance of micro-credentials

Develop a guidebook including a set of guidelines, good practices and recommendations for HEIs

MICROBOL project main conclusions

Encourage digitally awarded and user-controlled credentials, as a means to support portability, transparency and reliability of information and verification of authenticity

Explore if and how additional aspects need to be considered in the quality assurance of digitally-delivered micro-credentials

Develop official registers of micro-credential providers at national/regional levels, or incorporate them into existing registers. Ensure the inclusion of micro-credential providers in DEQAR, based on quality assurance in line with the ESG

Promote the development of clear and transparent catalogues of existing micro-credentials offered by registered providers

Create opportunities for peer support and exchange of practices among stakeholders at national and international level

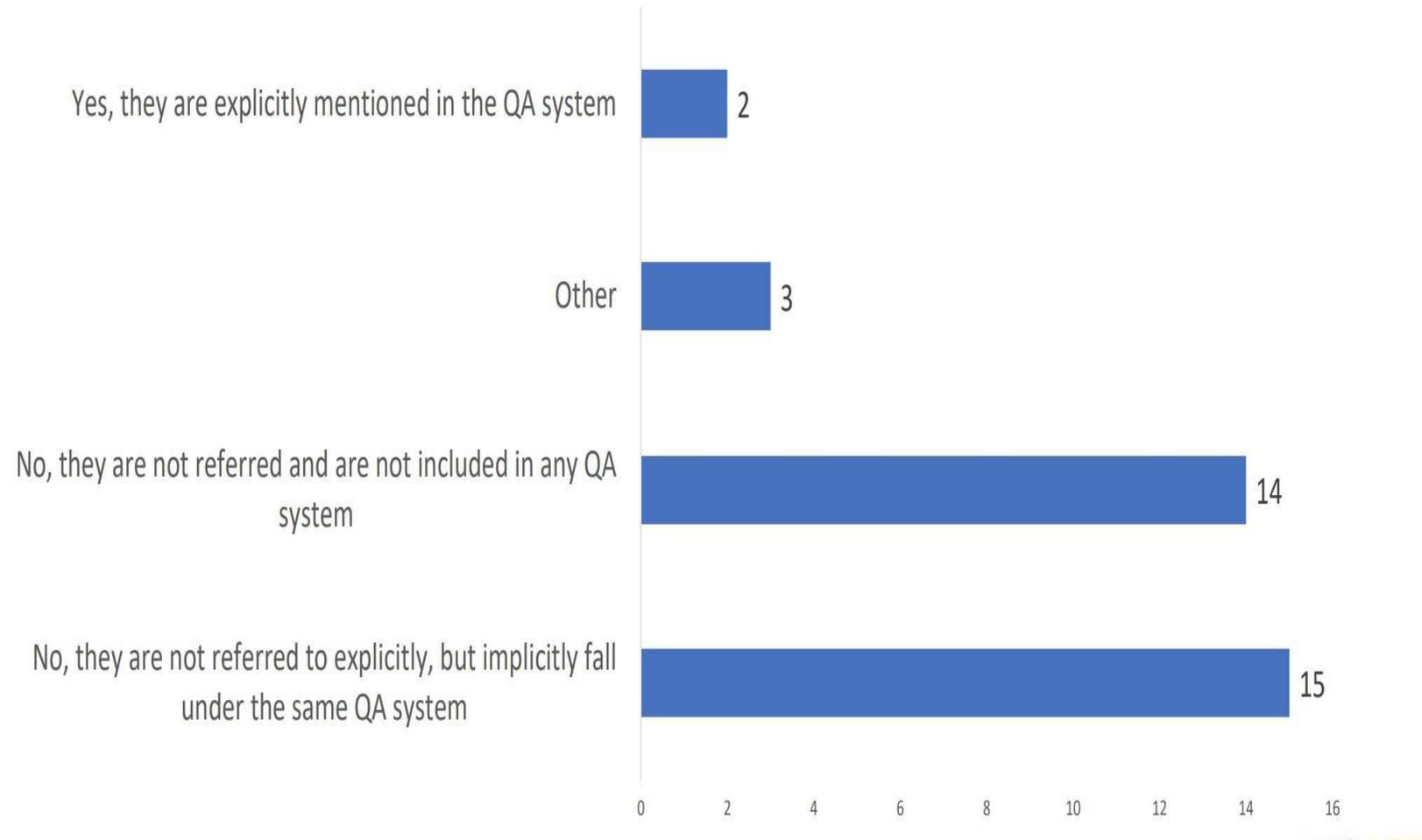
Poll question

Have there been discussions about how the QA system should address micro-credentials in your country?

- Yes, just started
- Yes, there is a strategic plan for an approach to be developed
- Yes, there is a draft approach
- No, but there are plans to develop one
- No, but the topic presents high interest
- No, and there are no plans yet
- No, there is no need to develop or update the existing QA system

Participants can join at [slido.com](https://www.slido.com) with #1125336

MICRO CREDENTIALS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL QA SYSTEM



https://microcredentials.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2021/02/Microbol_State-of-play-of-MCs-in-the-EHEA.pdf

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QA AGENCIES

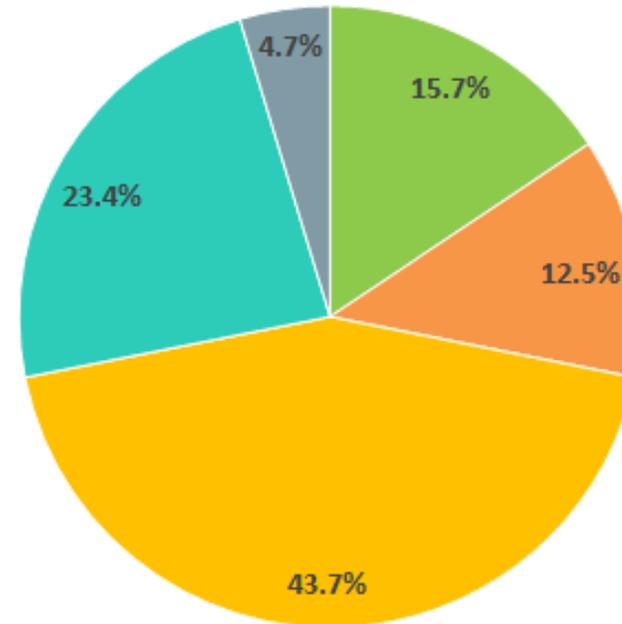
ENQA WG on QA of micro-credentials

64 responses

≈ 1/3 YES + DEVELOPING

≈ 1/2 FOR FUTURE

Does your agency/organisation currently quality assure MC?



- YES
- NOT currently, but approach is being developed
- NOT currently, but intended to in the future
- NO and not intending to
- Don't Know

IMINQA WG - Discussion

Policies and their development

Q: What are the national (local) plans regarding the development of new policies/revision of existing policies for QA of micro-credentials? Are new/revised policies necessary or the existing ones are fit for micro-credentials?

Q: How is your country approaching/plans to approach this process? Are various stakeholders involved?

Q: Have there been investigations of the employers' acceptance of micro-credentials? If so, what are the main findings and how these feed into policy development/revision process?

Registers/Catalogues

Q: Are there discussions and/or plans regarding the development of a national register for micro-credential providers and/or catalogues of micro-credentials offered by registered providers?

Quality label

What are the benefits and disadvantages of using a quality label for micro-credentials evaluated against the ESG?

Internal quality assurance

The primary responsibility for the quality of provision lies with the higher education institutions (ESG, 2015)

put in place quality assurance processes corresponding to the expectations laid down in Part 1 of the ESG

consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student “life cycle” (ESG standard 1.4)

All micro-credentials should be subject to internal QA with well-built system to monitor their quality internally. Consider that stand-alone micro-credentials may require more elaborate QA procedures

HEIs’ to publish clear policy and information on how they approach the quality of micro-credentials

Include learners in all steps of the development, implementation and QA process of micro-credentials

IMINQA WG - Discussion

IQA and Stackability

Q: Are there discussions related to stackability and IQA at HEIs in your country? What are the main aspects discussed? What are the main challenges related to this topic?

IQA and Non-HEI providers & Partnerships

Q: How are HEIs approaching the development of new partnerships with the aim of joint provision of micro-credentials?

Q: What is the role of IQA in ensuring that RPL mechanisms allowing for recognition of micro-credentials are in place?

IQA and digitally delivered micro-credentials

Q: What are the main/specific aspects considered by IQA regarding digitally delivered micro-credentials?

Digital award of micro-credentials (in support for portability, transferability and reliability of information)

Q: Are HEIs in your country awarding micro-credentials digitally? What are the main/specific aspects that IQA needs to consider in this regard?

External quality assurance

QA agencies' role is to support higher education institutions in developing policies and processes for QA

To ensure the public and stakeholders about the effectiveness of these

To explicitly address internal QA of micro-credentials

The application of programme level evaluation procedures should not be encouraged for each micro-credential course

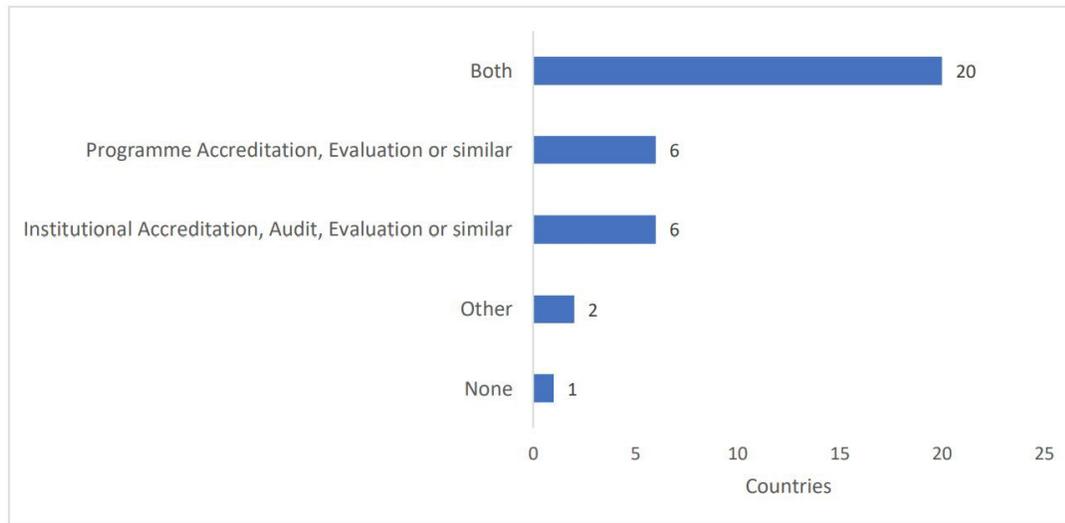
The institutional evaluation approach is better fit to cover also micro-credentials

Different types of micro-credentials might require different evaluation approaches

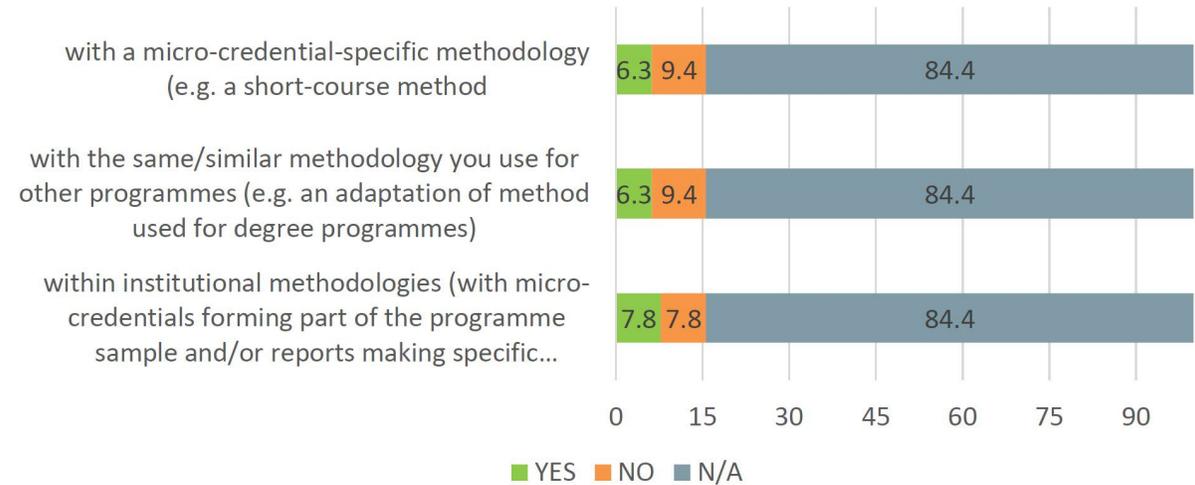
stand-alone micro-credential vs micro-credential that is part of a bigger degree programme
online mode vs the face-to-face

External quality assurance

Figure 14: External quality assurance systems



C15. How do you externally QA MC?



IMINQA WG - Discussion

Approaches to EQA of micro-credentials

Q: What are the external QA approaches to micro-credentials in place at the quality assurance agency (agencies)?

Q: Do the approaches differ for stand-alone micro-credentials vs micro-credential that is part of a bigger degree programme; delivered online vs face-to-face?

Non-HEI providers

Q: Do the EQA procedures need to be adapted for the provision of micro-credentials in partnerships (e.g. HEIs and business)? If yes, what are the main aspects to consider?

Q: Would the QA agency consider evaluating micro-credentials provided by non-HEIs? Could it be done in the context of your country/system?

Lunch break until 14.00

14.00 Exchange of ideas on the QA of micro-credentials offered by non-HEI providers

14.45 Way forward & Division of tasks

15.00 End of meeting

Exchange of ideas on the QA of micro-credentials offered by non-HEI providers

Q: Have you been discussing this aspect?

Q: What are the benefits and challenges of having micro-credentials provided by the non-HEI providers?

Q: Do you think that non-HEI providers would be interested in having their micro-credentials evaluated by a QA agency? Why and how?

Q: Do you think that this is necessary? Why and how?

Way forward & Division of tasks

Desk research - writing group

IQA guidance - writing group

EQA guidance - writing group

Key Considerations for non-HEI providers - writing group

Next meeting

February 2022 online

Thank you

Questions? Contact us: IMINQaproject@gmail.com

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