

Review of the ECTS Users' Guide

BFUG, 16 December 2025



Session Agenda

Time	What
11:00 – 11:30	Introductory presentation <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Main findings from research• Overview of changes in the draft 2027 Users' Guide Followed by immediate clarifying questions
11:30 – 11:50	Overarching comments and general discussion
11:50 – 12:10	Focus: mainstreaming micro-credentials and LLL
12:10 – 12:30	Focus: mobility, incl. grade transparency and conversion

Revision Timeline

When	What	
Feb – Sep 2025	Research on implementation	desk research, surveys, focus groups
June – Nov 2025	Advisory Group meetings	review draft 0, 1 & 2
November 2025	Consultation session	Use of ECTS outside HE, esp. VET
November 2025	BFUG Board	update incl. draft 2
15/16 December 2025	BFUG	Review of draft 2
January 2026	Advisory Group meeting	review draft 3
Q2 2026	BFUG	Endorse draft 3 (final)
Q2 2027	Iași-Chișinău Ministerial Conference	

Background Research

- Objective: analyse implementation and current practice in using ECTS in higher education
- Sample:
 - **8 EHEA countries:** Austria, Bulgaria, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Spain, Sweden
 - **10 HEIs** per country (different status, sizes, profiles ...)
- Sources:
 - Desk research (course catalogues, sample documents)
 - Surveys of students and staff
 - Focus groups (2 HEIs per country)
 - Erasmus+ participants' survey results

Key Findings: Programme Design and Delivery

ECTS is universally used in full degree programmes, and regarded by students and staff as increasing transparency.

- **Learning outcomes:** clear, but coherence varies
- **Workload:** concept understood, but monitoring inconsistent
- **Student-centred learning:** welcomed, but suffers from resource constraints
- Programme **flexibility:** differs widely
- **Course catalogues:** information not always complete, but largely satisfactory for students

Key Findings: Mobility and Recognition

Automatic recognition based on Learning Agreement largely works, **but ...**

- **Rigid approaches** to recognition persist: one-to-one matching, detailed content equivalence, ...
- **Issues became “hidden”** at Learning Agreement preparation stage
- Learning Agreements often **not final before student starts** or need change
- **Grade conversion rarely works**, very few institutions in EGRACONS
- Institutions **continue to use deprecated A-E/F** scale
- **Digital infrastructure** (incl. Erasmus Without Paper) streamlined processes

Key Findings: Lifelong Learning

Use of ECTS outside full degrees and their courses not fully mainstreamed:

- Credits from blended intensive programmes (BIPs) or similar not always recognised/stacked as part of the curriculum
- ECTS allocated **only for ca. 60% of micro-credentials**
- **Regulatory uncertainty**, especially QF level assignment inconsistent
- **Recognition of prior learning** options often not known and underutilised

Changes: Overarching

- **ECTS as universal credit system for lifelong learning**
 - Suitable for learning at all levels
 - All contexts: formal, non-formal and informal
- **Key features** thoroughly reviewed
 - Include all essential elements, e.g. learner-centred, constructive alignment, grade issues
 - Quoted in the remaining Guide to avoid repetition
- **Mainstream** lifelong learning
 - Recognition of non-formal and informal learning integrated with awarding and accumulating chapter, rather than a separate add-on
 - Separate learning opportunity design and delivery (= formal education focus)

Changes: Overarching

- Use of ECTS **outside higher education**
 - Not entirely new, but growing relevance since ECVET repealed
 - Terminology changes: e.g. student → learner
 - Clear specification re. awarding of credits and QA references for all levels
- ECTS remains “**owned**” by **EHEA ministers**
 - For higher education: use of ECTS is EHEA key commitment and obligatory
 - For other sectors (or regions): use of ECTS is optional
 - Differentiated arrangements for future changes

Changes: Micro-Credentials

- **Clarify applicability**

- Reflect micro-credentials as a regular offer, on par with full programmes
- Use of ECTS for all learning opportunities, incl. micro-credentials
- Adjust language throughout Guide: whenever “programmes” are mentioned, also small standalone learning opportunities are

- **Transparency**

- ECTS credits always come with QF level indicated



accumulation



stacking



qualification/degree

Changes: Mobility and Recognition

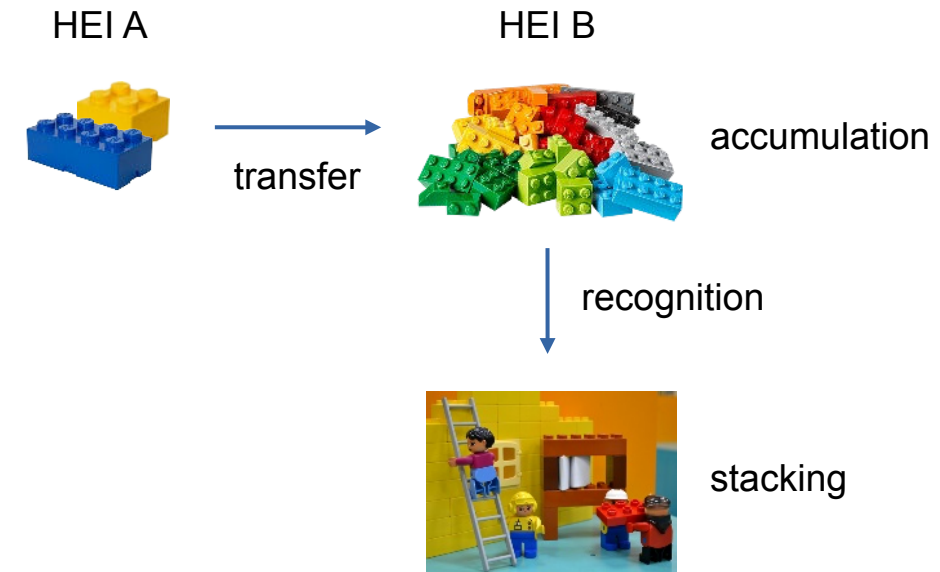
- Clearer **distinction of key concepts:**

- Transfer = move credits from A to B
- Recognition = count those credits towards a qualification

- Structure follows stages of mobility in practice

- Distinguish different scenarios

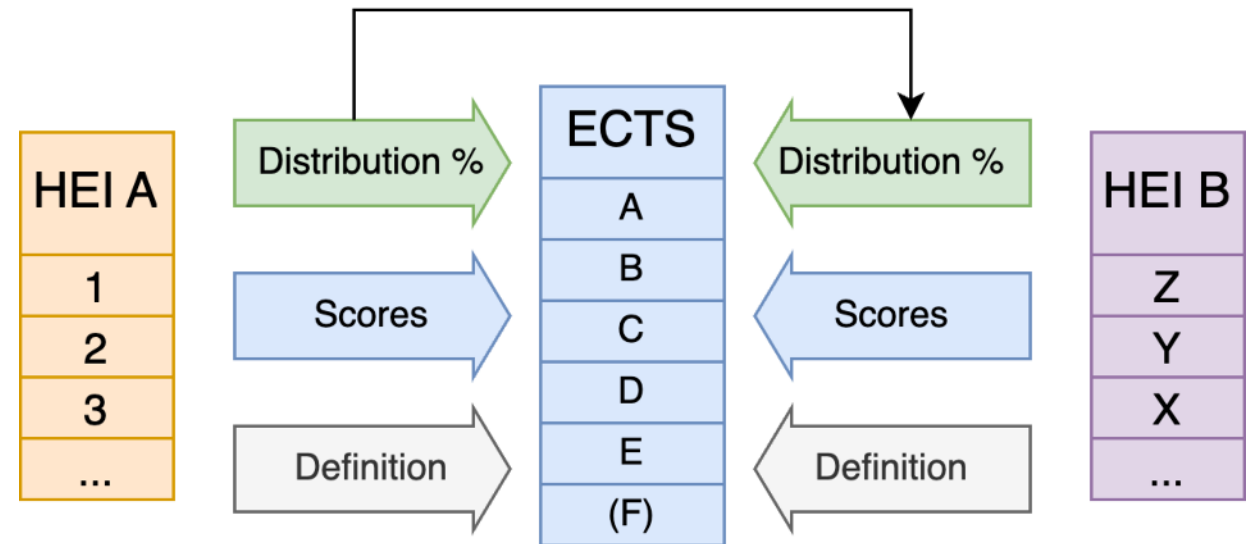
- **Individual pre-agreed** mobility: classical Learning Agreement (LA) → automatic recognition
- **Embedded pathway:** general agreement instead of individual LA → automatic recognition
- **Free individual mobility:** no LA → recognition decided ad-hoc afterwards



Changes: Mobility and Recognition (cont'd)

- **Grade transparency**

- Reintroduce A-E/F as reference grades, mapping from local grades, indicated for transparency
- Grade distribution info simplified and part of Transcript, rather than separate



- **Grade conversion**

- Perform only if necessary (e.g. average, student request, ...)
- Direct statistical method: matching between distribution tables (= current Guide)
- Via reference grade: always possible, even if both sides used different mapping approach

Changes: Digitalisation

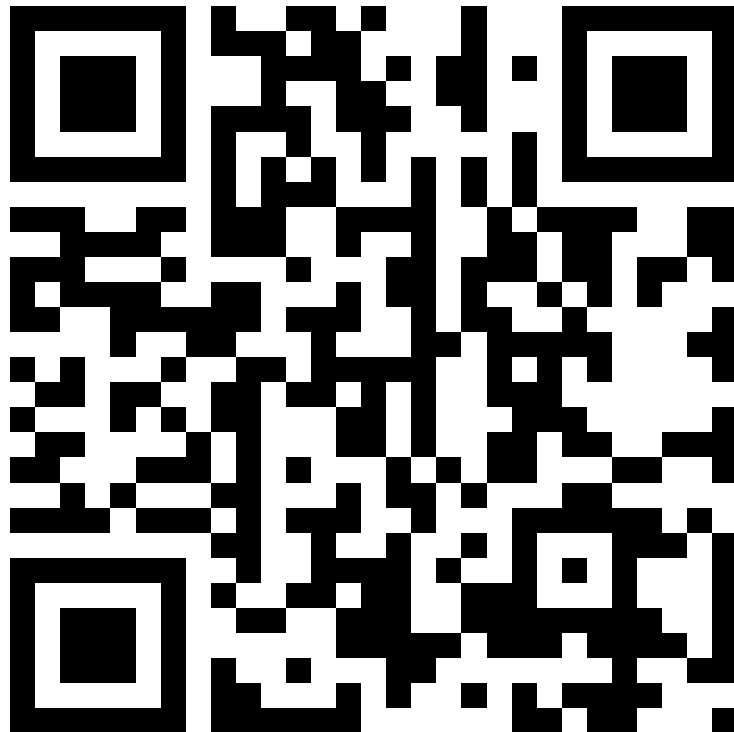
- Reflect advancement in digital infrastructure
- Basic principles regarding the use of artificial intelligence (AI)
- Reference key Europe-wide technology standards where applicable
 - Erasmus Without Paper (EWP) standards and network for mobility documents
 - European Digital Credentials for Learning (EDC) as universal format for documenting learning (and credits)
 - Current digital approaches to publish course catalogues, link to European Learning Model (ELM)

Changes: Structural

- **Clarified** language (must/should/can) and terminology
- **Streamlined quality assurance** chapter, focus on indicators for ECTS implementation
- Anticipate **modern publication format**, e.g. website rather than only PDF
- Shortened glossary:
 - No key feature duplication
 - No terms not used in Guide
- **No "breaking changes"** proposed

Additional feedback option

<https://survey.zohopublic.eu/zs/LNDDkd>



Questions – general

- Do you agree with opening ECTS explicitly for use outside higher education? Is that clear from the document, e.g. in the terminology used?
- Do you agree on the proposed modalities for future changes:
 - “Principles and Objectives” and “Key Features”: ministers' approval
 - Remaining, explanatory chapters: BFUG to commission and approve changes
 - “Further reading” boxes: can be updated by the European Commission and EHEA Secretariat, BFUG to be informed
- Do you find the terminology (must/should/can) understandable and clear?
- Do you agree with the provisions on awarding of credits at different QF-EHEA/EQF levels?
- Do you agree that a web-based publication would be preferable over (only) a monolithic PDF document? Should this be part of the EHEA website?

Questions - mainstreaming MCs and LLL

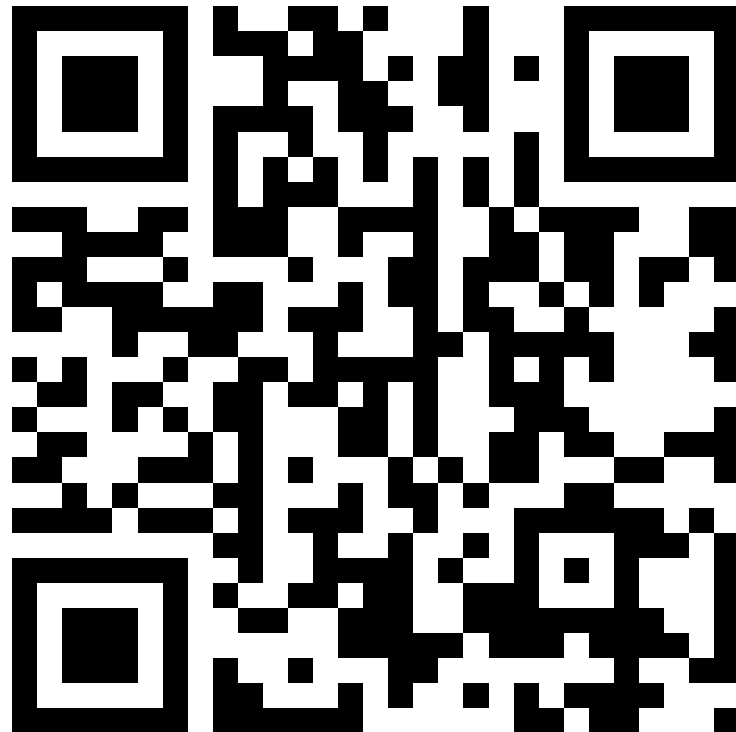
- Is the distinction and clarification of the terms “accumulation” and “stacking” clear?
- Is it clear from the text that ECTS credits should be used for full programmes (leading to short cycle, Bachelor, Master, PhD) as well as for micro-credentials or other smaller self-standing learning opportunities?
- Do you agree that ECTS credits should always be accompanied by an indication of a level (QF-EHEA or EQF)?
- Do you agree that the separation of design/delivery of learning opportunities from awarding and accumulating credits (regardless of formal, non-formal or informal learning) underlines the equal standing of learning, regardless of context where it was achieved?
- Is the text around recognition of prior learning clear and reflects EHEA commitments?

Questions – mobility, including grades

- Do you agree that the updated scenarios capture the reality well or do you see any scenario missing?
- Do you agree with the updated guidance on credit transfer and recognition?
- Do you agree with the principle that original grades should be reported, incl. contextual information, and only be converted if actually needed (e.g. to calculate an average grade or similar)?
- Do you agree that re-introducing an ECTS reference grade (A-E + F) could help transparency and understanding?
- Which do you consider the most preferable option for mapping local grades to the ECTS reference table?
- Would you consider a national/system-wide mapping of grades against the ECTS reference table or leave it up to individual HEIs?
- Which option for mapping local grades to the ECTS reference table would you/your HEIs most likely use?

Additional feedback on this draft until Wed 17 December:

<https://survey.zohopublic.eu/zs/LNDDkd>



Thank you!