

Micro-credentials linked to the Bologna Key Commitments

Working Group on Recognition

1 September 2020

Introduction by Frederik De Decker

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



Introduction

- Introduce myself
- Closely linked to QA and QF/ECTS, because these facilitate transparency and trust needed for recognition
- Introduce the topic: two main parts in the title of the project:
 - (1) micro-credentials
 - (2) Bologna key commitments

Microcredentials: misconceptions

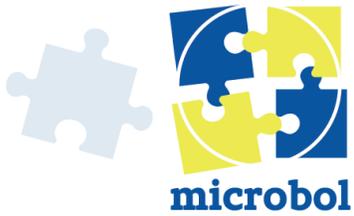
- \neq *microcredits*
- Limited to lifelong learning (so only 'post' types of education)
- Limited to 'new' forms of learning e.g. MOOCs and other types of e-learning

Existing Bologna tools and microcredentials

- One of the aims of the project is *“Check whether existing Bologna tools are fit for microcredentials and/or propose changes for adaptations on European level”*
- Possible Bologna tools to consider include:
 - Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA) - including: use of Learning Outcomes (LO's)
 - European Credit Transfer & Accumulation System (ECTS)
 - Diploma Supplement (c.q. Certificate Supplement) (DS)
 - European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG)
 - + also Lisbon Recognition Convention

Setting the scene

- Project is only in its first phase (but builds on previous experiences and expertise)
- Already a first publication



A first publication of
the project (edited
by EUA)

European project MICROBOL

Micro-credentials linked to the Bologna Key Commitments

Draft publication
Desk research report

August 2020

Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



Definition of microcredential

a small volume of learning certified by a credential

In the EHEA context, it can be offered by higher education institutions or recognised by them, when offered by other providers, using recognition of prior learning (RPL) procedures. A micro-credential is designed to provide the learner with specific knowledge, skills or competences that respond to societal, personal, cultural or labour market needs. Micro-credentials have explicitly defined learning outcomes at a specific QF-EHEA/NQF level, an indication of their associated workload in ECTS credits, assessment methods and criteria, and are subject to quality assurance in line with the ESG.

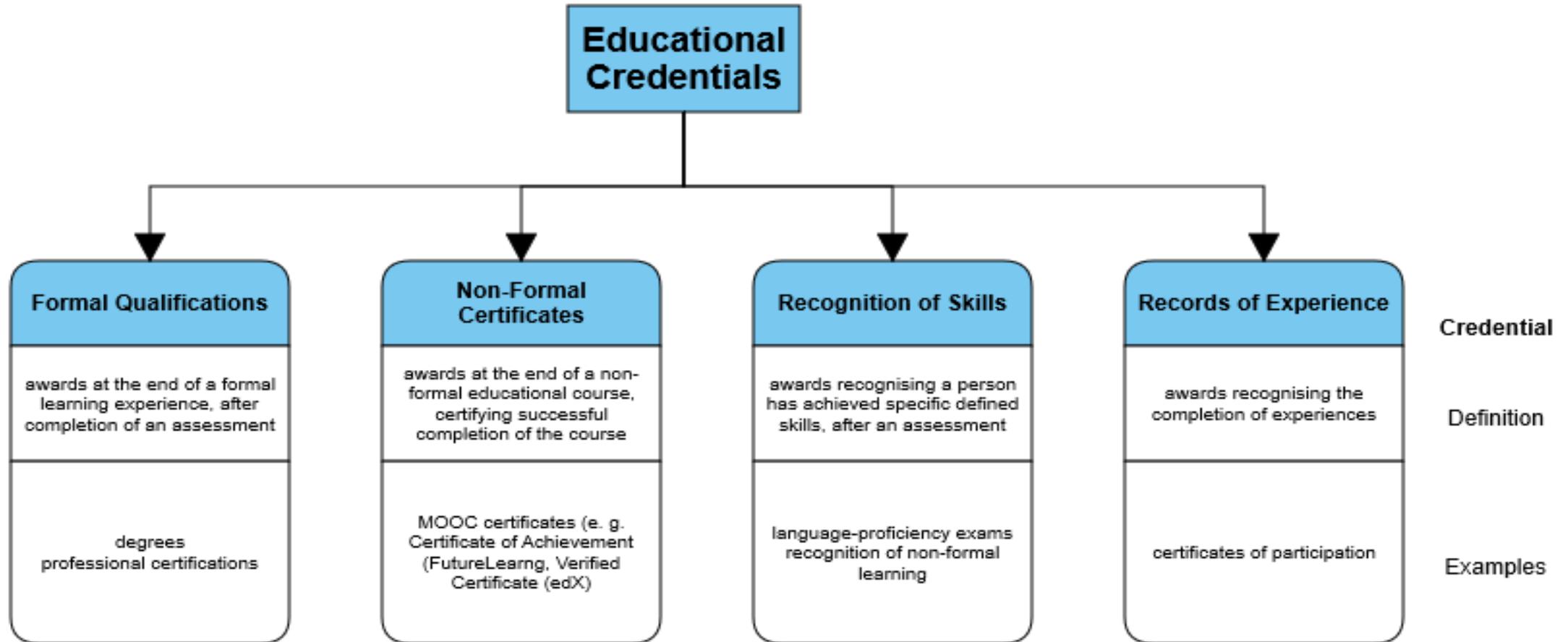
Definition of microcredential

a small volume of learning certified by a credential

*In the EHEA context, it can be offered by higher education institutions or recognised by them, when offered by other providers, using recognition of prior learning (RPL) procedures. A micro-credential is designed to provide the learner with specific knowledge, skills or competences that respond to societal, personal, cultural or labour market needs. Micro-credentials have explicitly defined **learning outcomes** at a specific **QF-EHEA/NQF** level, an indication of their associated workload in **ECTS** credits, assessment methods and criteria, and are subject to quality assurance in line with the **ESG**.*



Types of Educational Credentials



(Source: OEPass consortium, 2018)

Relevant part re. recognition

- Offered by higher education institutions or recognised by them, when offered by other providers, using recognition of prior learning (RPL) procedures

Example of Flanders (BE)

- *Offered by higher education institutions: “Credit certificates”*
- *Recognised by higher education institutions:*
 - Formal learning (HE) “Recognition of Prior Qualifications” (incl. these credit certificates) (“*EVK*”)
 - Non-formal/informal learning “Recognition of Prior Competences” (“*EVC*”)

Credit certificate (*creditbewijs*)

- Definition (legal): *an acknowledgement that, after an evaluation, a student has proven to master the competences* of a particular course unit. This acknowledgement is recorded in a document or is established by means of an electronic registration.*
- Use: exemption of parts of another study programme when shifting to another programme → RPL

* *Remark: in the Flemish context competenc(i)es and learning outcomes are often used interchangeably...*

Example Recognition of Prior Qualifications

Programme Ba in Economical Sciences at Ghent University

Course	ECTS	Result
Accounting 1	6	Credit cert.
Economic English	3	Credit cert.
Mathematics	5	No
...		
Total	60	20

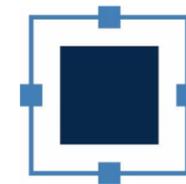


Programme Ba in Business Management at HoGent UAS

Course	ECTS	
Basic accounting	5	exempted
Business English	3	exempted
Statistics	4	not
...		
Total	46	

Example Recognition of Prior Competences

- Procedure of Ghent University Association (= univ. + 3 UAS)
- Assessment of an applicant's competences based on a portfolio + one or more of the following methods: reflection file, competence-based interview or capability test
- Possible result:
 - “Certificate of Competency”
 - Can be used to get exemptions of courses (see above)



A S S O C I A T I E
U N I V E R S I T E I T G E N T

RECOGNITION
PREVIOUSLY ACQUIRED COMPETENCIES
GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS
EDITION 2020

Possibilities of this legal framework

- Create microdegrees (see examples of HoGent UAS)

Bundled together
as a microdegree



A number of courses →
successful completion =
credit certificates

Examples of HoGent UAS

bachelors

graduaten

bachelor na bachelor

academische bachelors en masters

master na master

postgraduaten

educatieve opleidingen

afstandsonderwijs

verkorte trajecten

navormingen en studiedagen

gereguleerde vormen

micro degrees

**HO
GENT**

opleidingen

studeer aan HOGENT

partners

dit is HOGENT

nieuws en info



bachelors

graduaten

bachelor na bachelor

academische bachelors en masters

master na master

postgraduaten

D
Duurzaamheid

Dit deeltraject stelt je in staat om vanuit je initiële bachelor- of masteropleiding mee te werken

M
**Meertalige
communicatie-
training voor de
zorgprofessional**

Wil je je relatie met patiënten

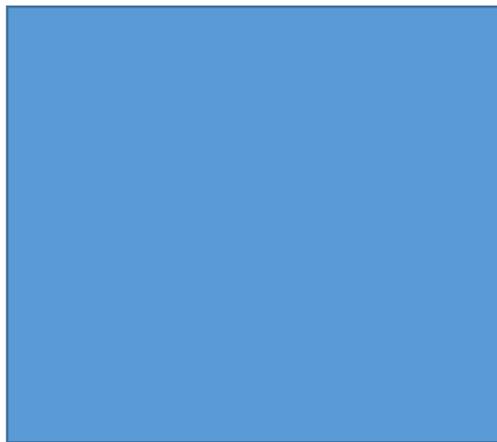
P
**Preventieadviseur
niveau 2**

Wil je gestalte geven aan een preventiebeleid (arbeidsveiligheid,





Opleidingsonderdeel	semester	studiepunten
Beleid en regelgeving klimaat en milieu	1	5
Duurzame ontwikkeling	1	3
Strategisch management	2	3
Duurzaam ondernemen	2	5
Mondiale milieuproblematiek	2	3
Mobiliteit	2	3
Ruimtelijke ordening	1	4
Natuur		6
- Partim Ecologie	1	3
- Partim Wetgeving natuur	1	1
- Partim Case natuur	1 & 2	2
Energie	1	3
Duurzame innovatie	1 & 2	3
Project duurzaamheidsassessment	1 (& 2)	7
Communicatie en sensibilisering	1 & 2	3
(Zorgsystemen - optioneel)	(1)	(3)



Possibilities of this legal framework

- Create microdegrees (see examples of HoGent UAS)
- Ghent University is setting up a system to support and validate students' societal engagement through:
 - “Certificates of Competency”
 - “Badges” (= an online standard to recognize and verify learning, e.g. Open badges, Badger,...)
- New & European = Credentify

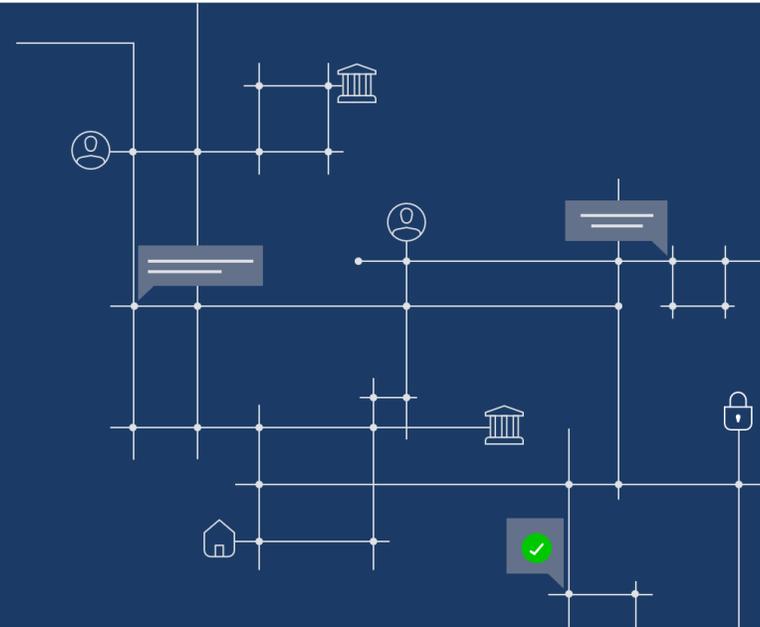


An API service in the cloud that enables universities and students to issue and receive micro-credentials that can be stacked into ECTS

The first European issuer of blockchain-secured stackable ECTS credentials that are university and student owned, and verifiable anywhere, anytime.

GET STARTED

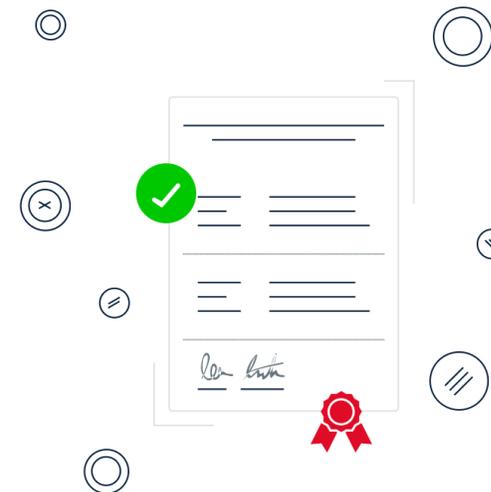
GET IN TOUCH



Introducing flexible equity in European education

Credentify is a decentralized micro-credentials clearinghouse powered by a blockchain network across European universities allowing safe transfer of millions of micro-credentials as smaller units summing up into ECTS credits. This empowers European students, educational workers and universities across Europe to make the accreditation of their traditional learning experience fast, dynamic, safe, reliable, transparent and accountable.

Credentify ensures that micro-credentials are certified and mapped to European qualifications frameworks and can scale into other forms of Higher Education. Credentify therefore empowers students and universities with equitable knowledge accreditation by allowing it to be more fair and flexible in its delivery. Credentify is built on native European technologies, extensive policy and research analysis and is integrated with ESCO to maximize impact in the European Education Area and Digital Single Market.



Advantages of such an approach

- Facilitates recognition because
- It is in the interest of
 - HEI's: fits with existing practices e.g. ECTS, especially the concept of “credit transfer” as we know it from international student mobility
 - end users: ownership
 - potential employers: increased trust

What about the LRC?

From the EUA-study → there are several sections in the LRC that imply that micro-credentials offered by accredited higher education institutions **would fall** within its scope:

- Section I – Definitions reads that a “[h]igher education qualification” is “[a]ny degree, diploma or other certificate issued by a competent authority attesting the successful completion of a higher education programme” (p. 3).
- Article IV stipulates that “[e]ach Party shall recognise the qualifications issued by other Parties meeting the general requirements for access to higher education in those Parties for the purpose of access to programmes belonging to its higher education system, unless a substantial difference can be shown between the general requirements for access in the Party in which the qualification was obtained and in the Party in which recognition of the qualification is sought.” (p. 6).
- Article V referring to the recognition of periods of study states that “[e]ach Party shall recognise periods of study completed within the framework of a higher education programme in another Party. This recognition shall comprise such periods of study towards the completion of a higher education programme in the Party in which recognition is sought, unless substantial differences can be shown between the periods of study completed in another Party and the part of the higher education programme which they would replace in the Party in which recognition is sought.” (p. 7).

What about the LRC?

- Yesterday: during the Mentimeter-poll → LRC = least applicable to microcredentials
- Surprising? Lisbon Recognition Convention → 1997 !
- Remember: a microcredential can refer to the 'content' and the 'envelope'
 - Content → linked to accreditation
 - Envelope → quality of documentation (e.g. what information it provides)

What about the LRC?

- Crucial element: recognition = the default, unless substantial differences can be shown
- This means that “*When the micro-credential is awarded by an accredited higher education institution, and the quality, the workload, the level and the learning outcomes are certified, it could undergo the usual assessment procedure of the academic recognition.*” (draft desk research by EUA, p. 33)
- But what about:
 - not-accredited? (e.g. other providers)
 - no indication of workload (ECTS), LO’s, level?
- Is this kind of information (all / equally) substantial?

The future of recognition of microcredentials in the Bologna context

- Ensure that it encompasses all types of learning (related to HE), i.e. beyond lifelong learning, MOOCs etc.
- Further develop initiatives e.g. Credentify (linked to ECTS)
- Investigate links with the European Student Card Initiative (= integration of Erasmus Without Paper, EMREX and the European Student Card → focus on student data portability)
- Use the potential of all the attention for the recognition of microcredentials in European Universities (EUn's)
- Check compliance with LRC

Contact details



www.ugent.be



Universiteit Gent



@ugent / @FrederikDD



[instagram.com/ugent](https://www.instagram.com/ugent)



Ghent University



Frederik.DeDecker@UGent.be

