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Microcredentials linked to the Bologna Key Commitments

WORKING GROUP ON RECOGNITION

11th May 2021

Presentation of the input document

Introduction

The input document is meant to provide **possible solutions and recommendations** to overcome the **challenges** linked to the recognition of micro-credentials, highlighted during the last Working Group on recognition, held in January 2021.

This final draft of the document results from:

- Two meetings of the Drafting Team

- Final review by the Microbol project's steering committee

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3. Way forward

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1. Common awareness/knowledge/consensus of what a micro-credential is

RECOMMENDATION

➢Enhance awareness of the importance of the European standards for the recognition of micro-credentials, create consensus and develop good practices.

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2. Coverage/link with Lisbon Recognition Convention

As far as possible, micro-credentials should be assessed according to the principles and procedures of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

Defining to what extent micro-credentials can fall under the definitions of "period of study" or "qualification" in the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

➢ Period of study: "Any component of a higher education programme which has been evaluated and documented and, while not a complete programme of study in itself, represents a significant acquisition of knowledge or skill".

➢ Higher education qualification: "Any degree, diploma or other certificate issued by a competent authority attesting the successful completion of a higher education programme" (LRC section I - Definitions).

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2. Coverage/link with Lisbon Recognition Convention

RECOMMENDATIONS

➢make explicit to what extent micro-credentials can fall within the scope of the Lisbon Recognition Convention;

➢clarify the legal ground for the academic recognition of micro-credentials;

➢explore the need for a subsidiary text to the LRC to support their fast and fair recognition;

➢consider the possibility to include a chapter on micro-credentials in the revised version of the <u>European Area of Recognition (EAR) manual</u> and of the <u>EAR HEI manual</u>, to support the development of day-to-day recognition practices.

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3. Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Validation of non-formal and informal learning can provide the opportunity for HEIs to standardise the value of industry types/ other types of micro-credentials.

Role of RPL: where it is not possible to have sufficient information on the main elements of the credential, the credential itself is not enough reliable about competences gained and it is awarded outside the formal context of Higher Education.

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3. Validation of non-formal and informal learning

RECOMMENDATION

➢ use validation of non-formal and informal learning only in cases where a formal credential is absent or it does not provide enough, reliable evidence of the competence gained, and develop RPL procedures that are fit-for-purpose and that are low threshold for Higher Education Institutions and learners.

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4. Legislation

Legal framework may be an obstacle for non-formal and informal learning recognition for access in HE or labour market, as well as for online/distance learning programmes.

When it is not possible to move in other directions it is important to explore changes in legislation, and exchange information with other countries that could have the same issues or that already solved these.

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4. Legislation

RECOMMENDATION

➢ explore whether a change in legislation is really needed, and if this is the case, plan the relevant changes in legislation, exchanging information with other countries and keeping into account good practices and experiences at international level.

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5. Quality and transparency of information

Need for information about quality assurance of micro-credentials by HEIs, to be assessed in the recognition process.

Providing information on the micro-credential, such as the proposed standard of constitutive elements of micro-credentials, could be a very helpful tool to facilitate recognition.

If transparency is ensured there might be less need for external quality assurance procedures because data can be easily collected, trusted and used for recognition.

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5. Quality and transparency of information

RECOMMENDATION

➢HEIs should provide information on the micro-credential, such as the proposed standard of constitutive elements of micro-credentials and the quality assurance mechanism for awarded micro-credentials. In particular, this should be included on the HEI website and in the micro-credential.

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6. Register of quality assurance providers

Need for information about quality assurance of micro-credentials by HEIs, to be assessed in the recognition process.

RECOMMENDATION

➢Consider the possibility to create a register of providers with QA for micro-credentials at the national level.

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6. Register of quality assurance providers

Quality and quality assurance are central elements for recognition. A register of providers and of micro-credentials awarded could represent a tool for supporting acceptance and recognition of micro-credentials.

RECOMMENDATION

➢Explore the possibility at national/regional level to offer a register of providers of quality assured micro-credentials.

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7. Digitalisation

Original certificates of micro-credentials should be in digital format and should be learner-owned (can be awarded in paper format in addition).

Digitalisation facilitates portability, transparency and reliability of information and verification of authenticity. Moreover, it supports a fast and fair recognition process and enhance stackability.

A fit-for purpose recognition approach, with the credentials itself containing all the needed information.

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7. Digitalisation

RECOMMENDATION

➢ Explore to what extent micro-credentials should be digitally awarded and learner-owned, as a means to support portability, transparency and reliability of information and verification of authenticity, and build a clear digital strategy in line with other ongoing initiatives e.g. EDCI (Europass Digital Credentials Interoperability), EDSSI (European Digital Student Service Infrastructure), and EBSI (European Blockchain Services Infrastructure). Start from project and experiences already live (e.g. DEQAR) and scale it up, taking inspiration for next steps. Develop and improve experiences already available.

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8. Involvement, knowledge and consensus among all actors

Awareness of the relevant stakeholders and their involvement in the discussion about recognition of micro-credentials.

RECOMMENDATIONS

➢ support knowledge sharing activities about on the topics of micro-credentials, involving relevant stakeholders, both at a policy level and at a "practictioner" level; development of a practitioner's guide for recognition of micro-credentials for HEIs and ENIC-NARIC centres.

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9. Peer exchange and support, guidelines

Exchange of information, experiences and good practices at different levels on legislative and policy developments is essential.

RECOMMENDATION

➢ Create occasion for peer support and exchange of practices among stakeholders at the international level.

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Thank you for joining us.

For more information on the microbol project, please visit our website:

www.microcredentials.eu/

Questions/suggestions: microbolproject@gmail.com