



Reporting of the Recognition Working Group Online, 11.05.21

During the morning of the second meeting of the Working Group on Recognition, the MICROBOL project coordinator gave an update on the current state of play of the project; after this, the input document drafted by the writing team was presented in two sessions, followed by the experts' inputs and by the discussions in groups. In the presentation of the input document, some of the topics were associated to several country and project experiences. All the presentations are available on the project's website, at [this link](#).

The discussion in groups on the input document was stimulated by the project experts, who pointed out the following aspects to take into consideration concerning the recognition of micro-credentials:

- The importance of recognition of micro-credentials lies in the way they can enhance **inclusiveness in Higher Education**. To achieve this objective, stackability and transparency are key elements, together with a common language.
- Legislation is relevant, but a key role is played by the **development of practices**, and the full use and exploitation of existing Bologna tools, such as LRC, QF and ECTS. From the side of HEIs, sharing practices, experiences and internal procedures in the recognition of micro-credentials would be very relevant.
- A **register of quality assured non-HEI providers of micro-credentials** can be useful, as well as transparent information about quality assurance of MCs provided by HEIs.
- **Digitalisation** can facilitate this ongoing process, not only in the direction of recognition of micro-credentials by HEIs and relevant stakeholders, but also in the framework of **users' participation in knowledge creation**.

During the two sessions in groups, participants further discussed the way forward for micro-credentials, focusing on additional elements and recommendations to the ones already in the input document. Please find them below, in a synthesis for each point of the document:

3.1. Common awareness/knowledge/consensus of what a micro-credential is – In the different groups there were discussions on how to find a common definition of micro-credentials, having in mind that from a recognition perspective it would be essential to have a shared one. The European Commission's definition is broader than MICROBOL's, which is more focused on HEIs as providers. Participants agreed on the need to find a balance between broadness and clarity in the definition: the solution could be to have a core and focus on the main elements that should be there, with the rest being sector-specific (with stackability and transferability as core characteristics).

3.2. Coverage/link with the Lisbon Recognition Convention – Participants agreed on the need to explore the possibility to have a subsidiary text to the LRC, after having defined a common definition of micro-credentials. The lack of legal instruments at the local level leaves the question of admission/recognition predictability open. In this sense, recognition agreements on micro-credentials among institutions, at regional level, may be relevant for the purpose of recognition. Most micro-credentials do not follow common standards for non-formal learning. When it comes to the

LRC, it would be advisable to streamline the procedure in line with the LRC and have a more flexible approach.

3.3. Validation of non-formal and informal learning – Need for shared understanding of non-formal and informal learning in relation to micro-credentials, and more discussion on this point. The need for evaluators to be trained on how to assess micro-credentials coming from the non-formal context was highlighted. With regards to this, the methodology used in the recognition of qualifications of refugees can be applied to further explore the boundaries between recognition of prior learning and (semi)automatic recognition – which, in a non-HE context, might be a more relevant issue.

3.4. Legislation – The use that can be made of micro-credentials still relies hugely on national legislation. The main challenge highlighted by the participants is that there is no actual shared understanding on how to integrate micro-credentials in the Higher Education systems yet. The groups agree on the idea that having a public (e.g., in EHEA website, ENIC-NARIC website) overview table for all countries to share the current situation and developments in terms of their legislation can be useful to have an overview of the state of play in the EHEA.

3.5. Quality and transparency of information – For recognition purposes, it is essential to have clear constitutive elements composing the micro-credentials, in order to collect relevant information. Micro-credentials also need to be internally quality-assured by the institutions. Some HEIs provide micro-credentials within the HE degree, but some offer them outside of degree programs. And in the latter case, they do not necessarily need to follow the same procedures to ensure the quality as the “full” degrees.

3.6. Register of quality assurance providers – The national level should be the starting point for starting such registers, just like was done with full degrees/qualifications; but ideally the registers should go beyond, considering the international relevance of micro-credentials. Participants agreed on including non-educational providers and catalogues/sub-registers of those providers; in this case, interoperability would be required. A common register would be very useful for students. Catalogues should follow the ECTS model to make them as compatible with the degree catalogues as possible.

3.7. Digitalisation – The word “digital” should be included in the definition of micro-credentials, since they should be as far as possible awarded also in digital format. Data portability is crucial to facilitate the acceptance of micro-credentials. Participants from the various groups agreed on the importance of creating synergies with existing networks and experiences (e.g., Europass/EDCI).

3.8. Involvement, knowledge and consensus among all actors – The participants agreed on the need to involve relevant stakeholders and HEIs in the process, together with platforms providing MC programmes. Involvement of stakeholders and HEIs in particular will depend on their ability to communicate their offerings.

3.9. Peer exchange and support, guidelines – All the participants from the different groups agree on the fact that peer-exchange and peer-learning activities may be taken into consideration in the framework of further cooperation for future projects. Some of them suggested the possibility to create a platform to share good practices on the topics tackled by the MICROBOL project.

A joint input paper from the different documents redacted by the Working Groups will be prepared, in the view of the European Commission’s Council Recommendations, by the end of June 2021.

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