European Quality Assurance Register
for Higher Education

External quality assurance of micro-credentials: challenges and opportunities

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Synchronising Micro-Credentials in the EU Ecosystem: Permanent Representation of Slovenia to the EU, 27th May 2025

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European Quality Assurance Register

Mission:

Enhance transparency and trust, promote international recognition

Role:

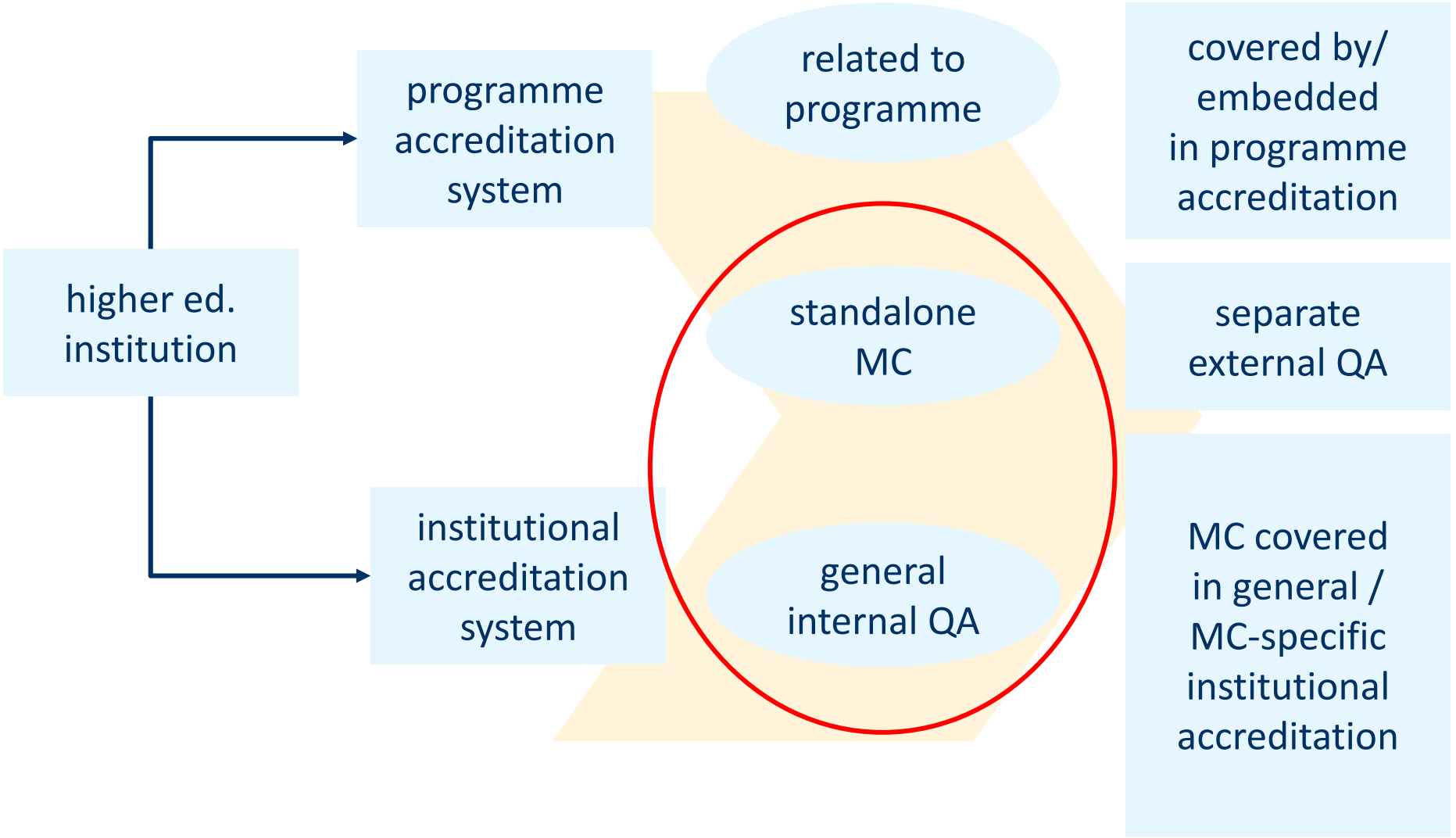
Official register of QA agencies that comply with the **Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG):**

- Established by and for the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)
- Founded by the E4 organisations (ENQA, ESU, EUA, EURASHE), jointly governed with HE ministries
- Non-profit, independent and acting in the public interest

Overview of the current landscape of micro-credentials

- **The number of micro-credentials**, measured by number of courses at 6 main learning platforms, **rose for more than 200% between 2018 and 2022** (OECD, 2023)
- Cedefop (2023) shows that **variety of actors** such as public organisations, companies and employment services, offer programmes at higher education level
- Employers surveyed (N=384) had a **stronger preference for micro-credentials offered by accredited providers** (62%) and to the ones being **offered as part of the national formal offer** of education and training (48%) (Cedefop, 2023)

QA of micro-credentials: Scenarios in practice



Key challenges for external QA

- Education structured in smaller units of learning
- So-called "*unbundling*" of educational offer and the learning and teaching process
- (in most contexts) Lack of formal framework as the ones that exist for full, official degrees
- Correct and transparent referencing to qualification frameworks

The ESG and micro-credentials

ENQA (2023): Quality assurance of micro-credentials (*working group report*)

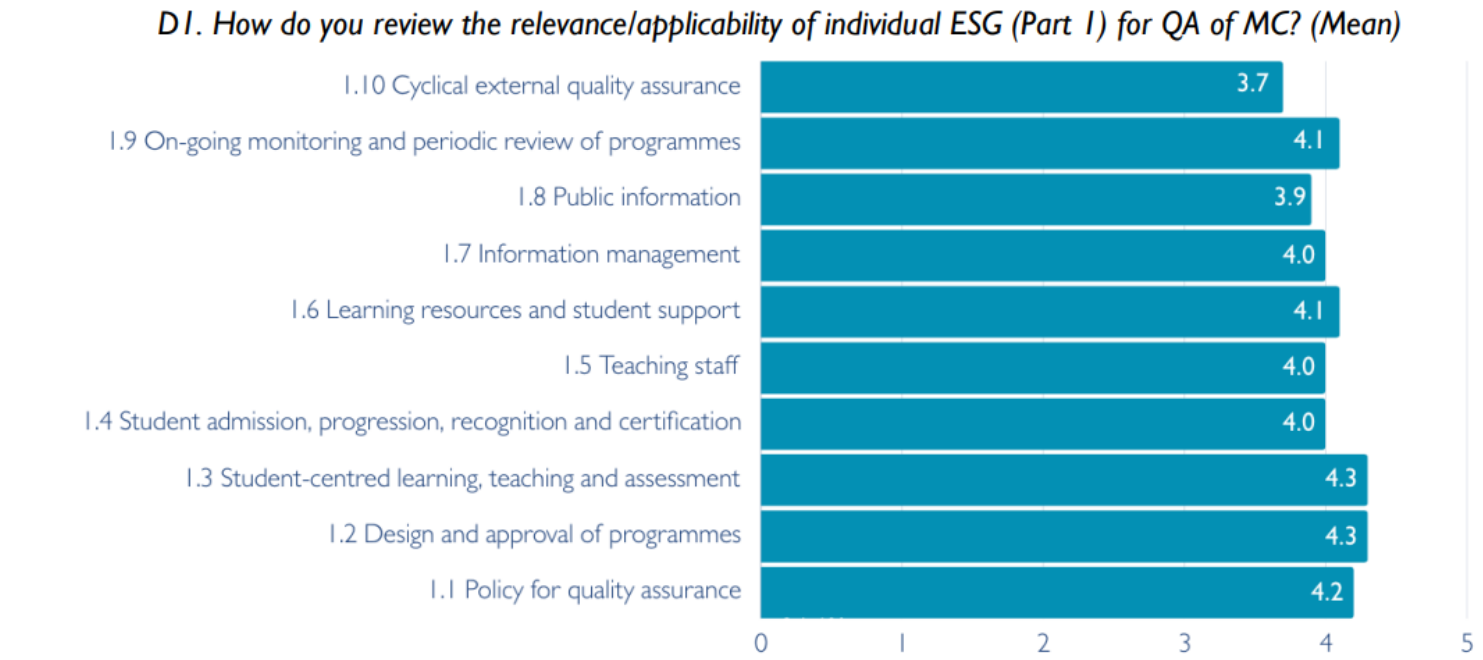


Figure 6. Relevance/applicability of the ESG (Part 1) (1 to 5 least relevant/applicable to most relevant/applicable).

The ESG and micro-credentials
(some examples)

1. **Clear communication about the learning outcomes, workload and assessment** (ESG 1.2; ESG 1.3; ESG 1.8)

2. **Consider flexible learning paths and modes** (ESG 1.3)

3. **Adequate resources to assist learning** (ESG 1.6)

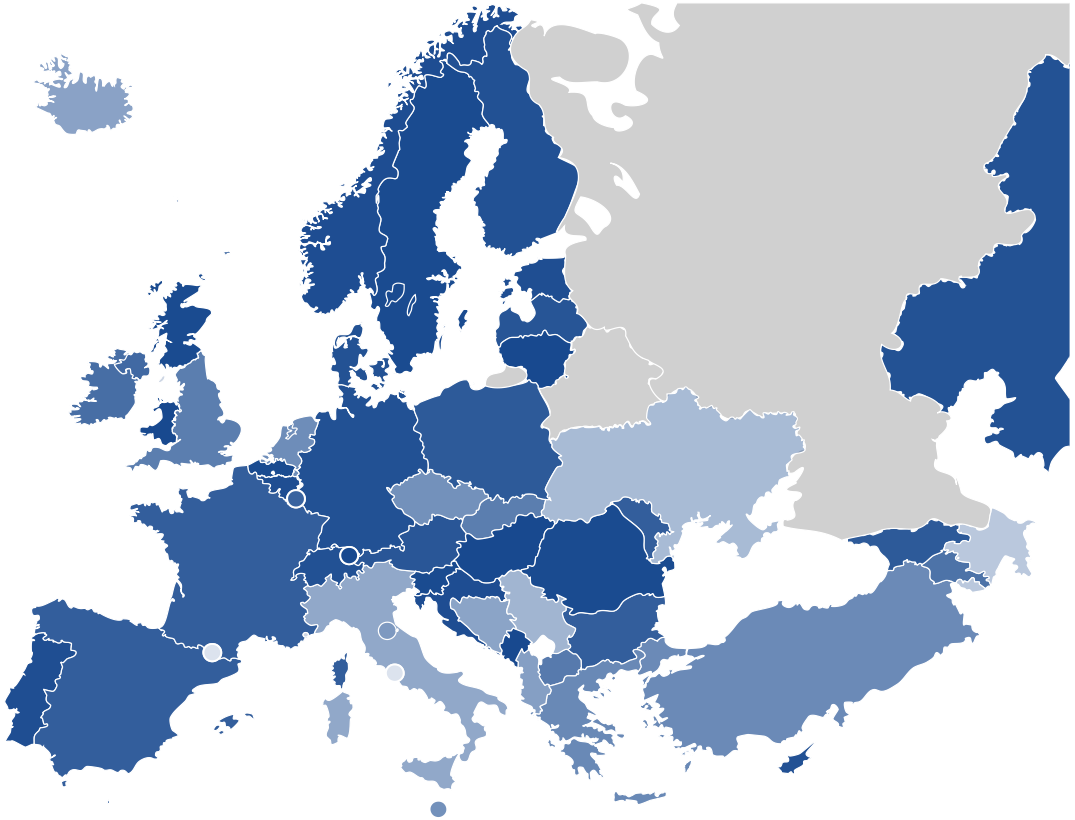
…

Database of external quality assurance results (DEQAR)

DEQAR in a nutshell

Clear and transparent access to external QA reports (i.e. **accreditations and evaluations**) and decisions by EQAR-registered agencies (**only higher education**)

	May 2025
Reports	**115 128**
HE Institutions (at least 1 report)	**4 515**
Higher Education Systems (≥ 50% of HEIs)	**24**
Agencies	**56**



Information in DEQAR

Accreditations and evaluations of (programme level):

a) Full degree programmes → Full (nationally) recognised degree

b) Micro-credentials and other → Not leading to a full (nationally) recognised degree, but at HE level

*Expansion supported by the IMINQA project

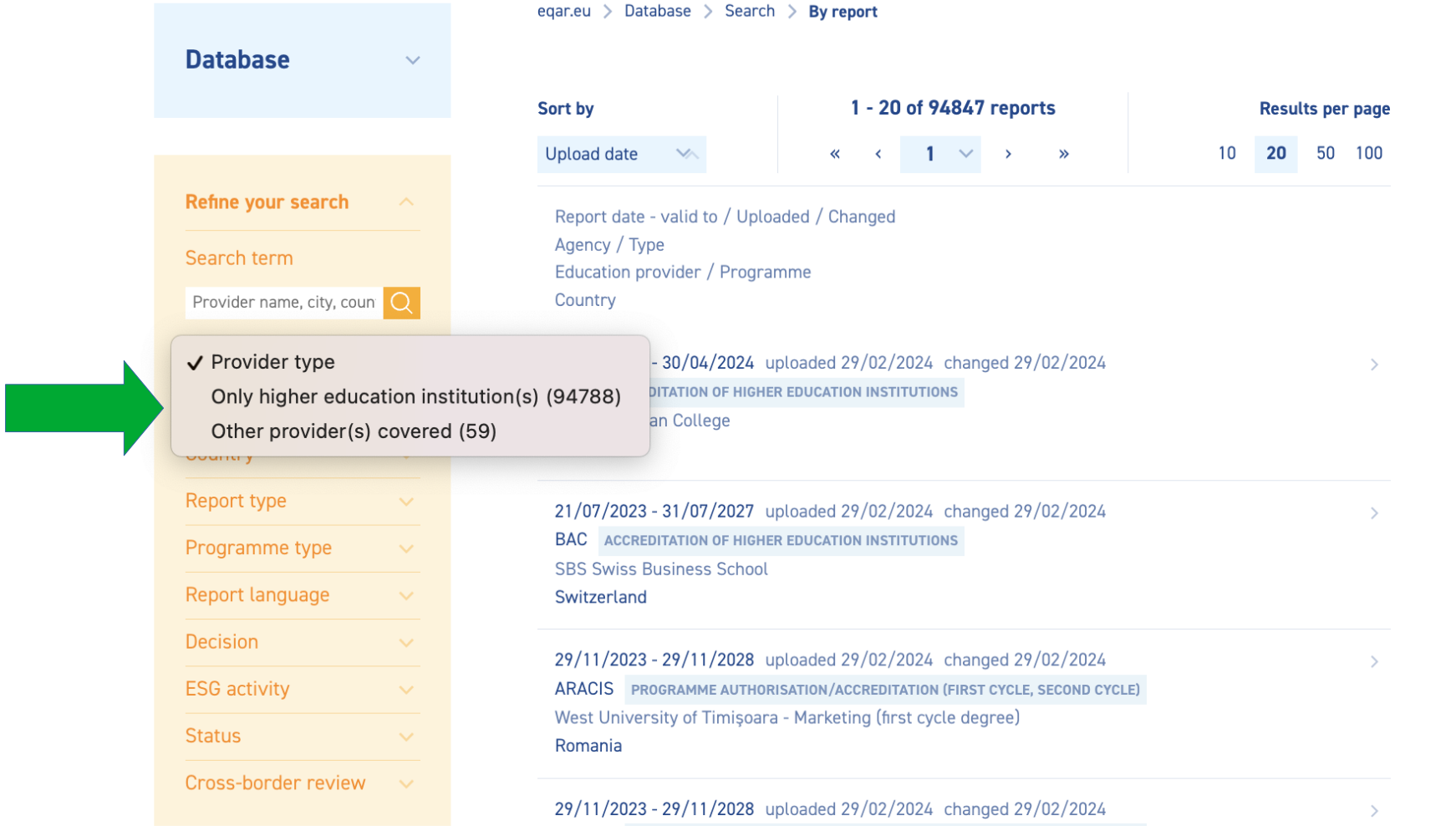
Definition of a micro-credential in DEQAR

a) Consists of a **workload expressed in ECTS** in the range of **1 and 59 ECTS credits**

b) Related to **EQF/ISCED level (5), 6, 7 or 8** OR **QF EHEA level short, first, second, third cycle**

c) Does **not** lead to a **full (recognised) degree**

DEQAR in practice



Certification of a micro-credential

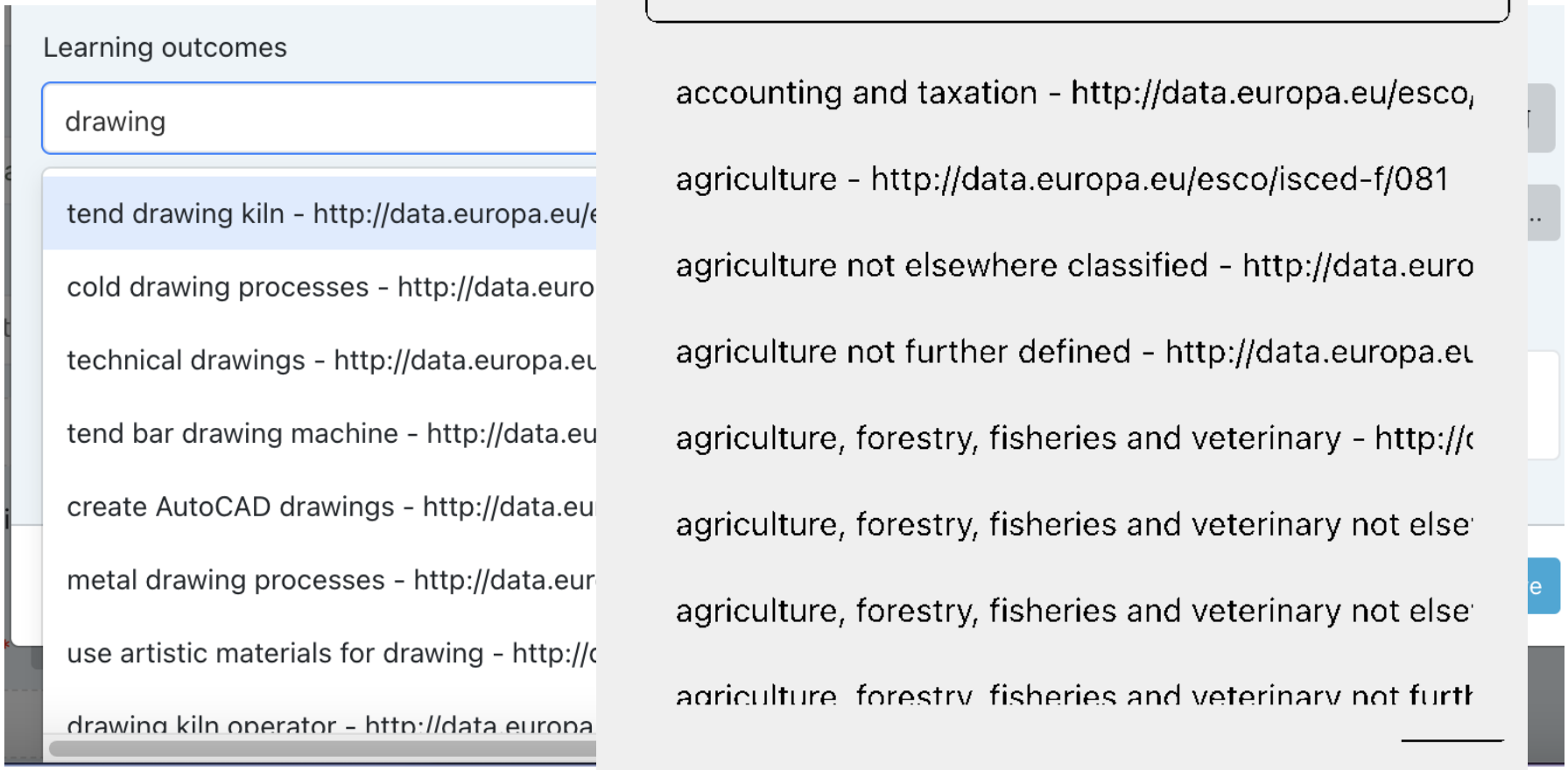
3D modeling software - CAD 1

Educational Centre "Zerde" Limited Liability Partnership

A3ES: Programme accreditation

Programme	3D modeling software - CAD 1
Qualification	
Level	first cycle
Programme type	Micro-credential
Workload (in ECTS credits)	15
Assessment and certification	Assessment based certificate
Learning outcomes	use CAD software
Field of study	engineering, manufacturing and construction

Connected with European Commission's ESCO API



Main observations

1. Methods for connecting micro-credentials **to a QF level** (reference – entry qualification)

2. The **use of terminology** “diploma”, “bachelor”, “master” **is not always protected via national legislation** (hence providers can utilise it for own purposes)

3. While different QA approaches exist, **the majority of evaluations so far were conducted through QA on provider or programme level** (rarely single MC)

Thank you!

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