

MAY 2025

Quality assurance of micro-credentials

Maria Kelo
Director, Institutional Development

Some initial challenges

- Need to have a shared understanding of «microcredentials» (different names, types, providers, purposes, uses, and users)
- Need to protect students' interests, support transparency, recognition, credits, quality of provision....
- Policy focus in EHEA and EEA
- Spontaneous market by a diverse range of providers



MT

TRADEMARK

TM

TRADEMARK

Tirana Ministerial Communiqué (2024)

- "Learning paths need to be **flexible, properly delivered, quality assured, and recognised**. They should promote inclusion, **upskilling and reskilling**, and be aligned with the requirements of learners, changing societies and **labour markets**. This also includes the recognition of prior learning, and new forms of education provision, such as **micro-credentials**."
- underscores the necessity for **quality assurance and recognition mechanisms for micro-credentials**, aligning them with existing frameworks to ensure their credibility and portability across the EHEA

The European QA framework



 Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance
in the European Higher Education Area

“The ESG (...) provide guidance, covering the areas which are vital for successful quality provision and learning environments in higher education.”

- Internal and external QA
 - **Apply to all education by all HEIs**, everywhere
 - But... the ESG are generic principles
- need to be „translated“ into different contexts, without creating „B-classes“
- how to interpret the requirements of the ESG for microcredentials?

QA of Micro-credentials by HEIs – what?

1. Content (the learning itself)

ESG apply! Especially important ESG 1.2 – design and approval of programmes and ESG 1.3 – student-centered learning, teaching and assessment

Mode of delivery has an impact (good practice from elearning re: student support, SCL, teachers' skills...)

Specific guidance on how to use the ESG for micro-credentials may be needed

2. The «envelope» (quality and reliability of the credential)

Portability, directly accessible, ownership by the user

Safe storage (if electronic)

Traceable information

Information on **learning outcomes**, level, workload (credits), assessment, issuing body, and quality assurance (a «**microcredential supplement**»)

→ **European Standard for Micro-credentials**

QA of Microcredentiali als by HEIs – how?

Primary responsibility of the awarding entity/institution(s)

ENQA mini-survey of agencies:

- 1/2: responsibility of internal QA, support and guidance from agency
- 1/3: responsibility of internal QA, no need for support from the agency

MICROBOL project:

- **EQA through institutional evaluation**, i.e. agency ensuring HEI has good **methods to ensure the quality of microcredentials internally**
 - HEIs should have a published policy on how they deal with microcredential QA
- **No «credential-level» external QA** (too much, too slow, too costly)
- How to deal with this in programme accreditation systems? Should/are all microcredentials part of existing (and QAed) programmes?

Diverse National Approaches to QA of Micro-Credentials

- Legislative integration of micro-credentials varies widely across the EHEA
- Internal QA usually mirrors traditional QA with targeted adaptations
- Most countries adapt existing QA procedures; few have MC-specific frameworks
- Collaboration with non-traditional providers is emerging but uneven. Approach to QA of alternative providers complex but exists

Main messages

- **QA process need to exist** and cover microcredentials to maintain trust
- important to **avoid parallel systems of offer**: accredited and non-accredited
- Important to **ensure/facilitate recognition**, particularly for HE use; traditional RPL not feasible

BUT...

- Processes should **not be excessively burdensome and expensive** (agencies and HEIs), nor take too long time!
- Need to be **sufficiently flexible** (joint delivery, professionally oriented, innovative...)
- **Clear information** about the QA methods used, the validity and potential use of the credential
- Peer support, discussions and guidance needed

Thank you for your attention

