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Micro-GEAR

Recognition of micro-credentials: building trust



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National Information Center for
Academic Recognition and Mobility

GAYANE HARUTYUNYAN

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Introduction to recognition

Micro-credentials are an important part of HE policy development agendas worldwide. In the European context:

EHEA: 2020 Rome Communiqué. *first formal mention of micro-credentials as small, flexible units aiming to enhance the accessibility and relevance of HE across Europe.*

- Importance for employability and inclusive education;
- Linking to digital transformation;
- Need for alignment with EHEA tools (ECTS, QA, QFs).

Before: 2018 Paris Communiqué. *No explicit mention of micro-credentials.*

- Emphasis on short learning courses, open and digital learning; education, flexible learning paths, RPL

Lifelong Learning in the Bologna Process

Lifelong learning emphasized since early communiqués

Focus on flexibility, access, and recognition of prior learning

Foundation for later adoption of micro-credentials

After: 2024 Tirana Communiqué: Ministers committed

“... to fostering flexible learning paths, which need to be flexible, properly delivered, quality assured, and recognized, in all higher education programs. This also includes the recognition of prior learning, and new forms of education provision, such as micro-credentials.”



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Questions for discussion

1. What are the **main steps** towards efficient and fair recognition of micro-credentials?
2. What are the **main tracks** of recognition?
3. What is the role of the Public bodies in developing an efficient ecosystem for micro-credentials facilitating recognition?
4. How important is information on micro-credentials in the recognition process?
5. How to link micro-credentials to QA and NQF?



Why micro-credentials are so important?

Due to a confluence of factors driven by the evolving nature work, education and individual needs. Here are some key reasons why they are so important:

For individuals:

- Rapid upskilling and reskilling
- Career advancement and specialization
- Flexibility, accessibility, affordability
- Stackability and credit recognition
- Personalized learning and career exploration
- Demonstrable skills and digital credentials
- LLL and professional growth

For employers:

Targeted skills identification
Closing Skills Gaps
Cost-effective training
Increased productivity and innovation
Attracting and retaining talent
Industry relevance and agility

For institutions:

Increased enrollment and revenue streams:
Enhanced program relevance
Improved student satisfaction and retention
Partnerships and employer engagement



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Data on educational attainment (2023 OECD)

Educational attainment across OECD is rather low. On average across OECD countries:

- 40% of adults (25–64 years) have a tertiary qualifications as their highest level of education.
- Another 40% have attained upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education.
- 20% of adults in OECD countries have not obtained an upper secondary education.
- The share of 25–34 years old without upper secondary attainment has fallen in most OECD countries. One in five adults has not completed high school education.

Upskilling and reskilling opportunities are crucial in order to succeed in the labour market and grant access to education and training of adults.



Key concept in EHEA's approach to Micro-credentials

Modular learning: Micro-credentials allow learners to build qualifications over time.

Learning outcomes: Micro-credentials are fundamentally described by the learning outcomes **that are** clearly defined, transparent, and assessed against specific criteria.

ECTS compatibility: Allowing for accumulation and transfer of credits.

Quality assurance: Micro-credentials should meet the same standards as traditional programs.

Digital transformation: Embracing digital badges, blockchain, and open platforms.

Recognition: Ensuring micro-credentials are valid across institutions and borders.



Context of recognition

Is a journey starting with a common definition and its main elements, purpose, typology, development and provision, assigning QF level, QA, digital solutions and portability, legal framework. Promoting recognition of micro-credentials among employers and HEIs vital for their acceptance and value.

Legal framework, Definition and purpose

EHEA:

- Lisbon Recognition Convention,
- Definition based on the Council Recommendation,
- *Enhancing Qualifications*. Micro-credentials enable learners to quickly enhance their qualifications with the focus on job market demands. Also, they can be used for academic purposes.

Armenia:

- Ratified recognition conventions,
- Definition of micro-credentials, credit allocation and quality issues are defined in draft “Law on HE and Science”. The definition still needs to be aligned with the European one to enable providers credit allocation,



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Typology

Micro-credentials can take various forms such as digital badges, certificates, and portfolio assessments to validate skills and knowledge.

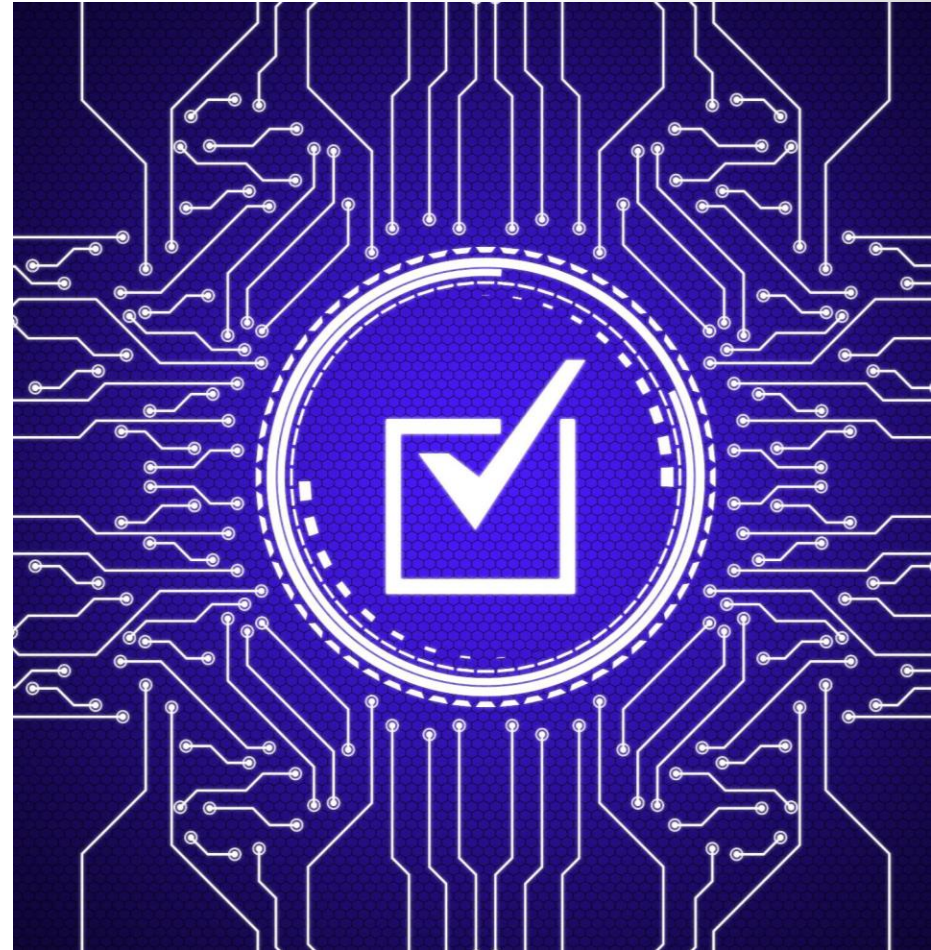
Digital Badges

Digital badges are visual representations of skills or achievements earned through online courses or programs, showcasing learners' accomplishments.

Certificates

Certificates serve as formal recognition of skills or knowledge acquired, often issued by educational institutions or course providers.

In *Armenia*, they exist only as standalone courses taking form of certificates.



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Differences Between Micro-Credentials and Traditional Qualifications

Agility and Length of Programs

Traditional qualifications generally require a longer commitment and extensive coursework, while micro-credentials are shorter and much faster (vs. time consuming).

Skill Focus and Relevance

Micro-credentials emphasize specific skills tailored to job market needs and its changing demands, ensuring relevance in careers (vs broader scope).

Stackable Pathways

They can accumulate into larger qualifications. This offers flexibility for learners to build their education progressively (vs fixed pathways).

LLL and upskilling

Enable individuals to continually upgrade their skill (vs. one time education).

Accessibility

They're often more affordable and accessible, making high quality education available to a broader population.



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Development and implementation

1. Micro-credentials(modular learning) with coherent profiles that align with larger study programs to facilitate stacking .
2. Stand -alone courses that can be evaluated as a single learning experience.

Depending on how micro-credentials are developed they either recognized through a procedure in line with the LRC, or through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

Design of micro-credentials shall be done with learning outcomes described skills and competence taxonomies, aligned with QFs, with appropriate learning and valid assessment methods.



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Transparency and information provision

The role of information is key for all type of qualifications including micro-credentials. An example could be national register or institutional catalogue.

- HEIs should ensure that information about course content and learning outcomes remains freely accessible and does not disappear when the course is revised or no longer offered.
- To facilitate academic recognition of modular learning, use existing Bologna tools such as NQF, ECTS, and diploma or e-learning certificate supplements to provide additional information about the learning outcomes of a course .
- Make the quality assurance of modular learning part of internal quality assurance procedures at HEIs.

Main elements of information

- Title, issuing body, country
- Date of issue
- NQF/EQF level or HE /Bologna cycle
- Short description
- Workload expressed in measurable manner
 - (if possible, in ECTS / number of credits)
- Learning outcomes
- Field(-s) of study
- Specific admission requirements (if applicable)
- Mode of learning (in-person/online/blended)
- Assessment method (if applicable)
- Grading scale (if applicable)
- Possibilities for further learning / combining / stacking
- Type of quality assurance used to underpin the micro-credential /module of learning

Complementary information:

- National and HEI's practices of recognition of non-formal and in-formal education
- Credit transfer system practices in HEI
- Further application of micro-credential
- Information on recognition of learning units (stacked micro-credentials)



Conclusions

Armenia is in the early stages of integrating micro-credentials into its education system. Key considerations include:

- Policy development: While Armenia has not yet fully implemented a national framework for micro-credentials, its participation in EHEA policy dialogues puts it in a position to adopt and adapt such models.
- Lack of common standards in micro-credential programs hindering its recognition including recognition across borders.
- Pilot initiatives: Armenian universities, especially those engaged in international cooperation (e.g., Erasmus+ projects), are beginning to explore micro-learning and modular courses.
- Digitalization: Armenia is working on enhancing digital education infrastructure, a crucial component for delivering and verifying micro-credentials.
- Primary responsibility for quality assurance lies with HEIs through their internal QA process adhering ESG standards.
- Institutional recognition procedures should include methodology for recognition of micro-credentials and ensure robustness of information: quality of the course, verification of the certificate, level, learning outcomes, workload, etc.



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Thank you!



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