

# **Analysis of Existing Micro-Credential System Practices in Higher Education System of Georgia**

K.Tavzarashvili<sup>1</sup>, A. Jangirashvili<sup>1</sup>, I. Noselidze<sup>1</sup>, Z. Tsiramua<sup>2</sup>, T. Onoprienko<sup>2</sup>, N. Goglichidze<sup>3</sup>, T. Gvenetadze<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The University of Georgia

<sup>2</sup> Georgian Technical University

<sup>3</sup> National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement

<sup>4</sup> Georgian Research and Educational Networking Association “GRENA”



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## Contents

<b>I. Introduction</b>	2
<b>II. Methodology</b>	5
2.1 Purpose of the survey	5
2.2. Selection	6
<b>III. Survey results</b>	8
<b>IV. Findings of the Report Based on the Survey Results Related to the Implementation of Micro-credential Programs:</b>	25
<b>References</b>	28
<b>Appendix 1</b>	29

## I. Introduction

The report is being implemented under the ERASMUS+ project "Micro-credentials for Higher Education systems of Georgia and Armenia: South Caucasus Lighthouse Project (Micro-GEAR, #: 101127144)" and aims to integrate micro-credentials into the higher education system of Georgia, focusing on development, implementation, and assessment practices, as well as analyzing the existing practices in Georgia regarding recognition, identification of challenges, and prospects for development. Additionally, it provides a comparison analysis based on the results of similar research conducted in 2021.

European Commission defines the micro-credentials as the record of the learning outcomes that a learner has acquired following a small volume of learning, while these learning outcomes will have been assessed against transparent and clearly defined criteria. (European Commission, 2021).

In the thematic analysis document prepared by the LEPL National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement in 2023, titled "Analysis of the Best International Practices and National Legal Framework for the Introduction of Micro-Credentials in the Higher Education System of Georgia," a micro-credential is defined as documented evidence of the assessment and confirmation of the achievement of learning outcomes within a small-volume learning activity in a structured environment. A micro-credential can be a stand-alone micro-qualification or be combined with other micro-credentials for the purposes of a wider qualification. (National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement, 2023, p. 10).

The potential of micro-credentials has been recognized by the European Commission, which in May 2022 2023/0100 (NLE), developed a recommendation on the introduction of a European approach to micro-credentials to promote lifelong learning and employment. The recommendation of the European Commission defines the framework for the development, implementation and recognition of micro-credentials in Europe. It calls on member states and stakeholders to cooperate in the direction of ensuring high quality of micro-credentials, compliance with standards and increasing accessibility. This recommendation aims to support the building of trust in micro-credentials across Europe among all those involved, whether providers or beneficiaries. (Council of the European Union, 2022)

On June 27, 2014, Georgia signed an Association Agreement with the European Union. According to this document, the parties should collaborate in the field of education and training to align with EU policies and practices.

It is noteworthy that in Georgia, there is experience in implementing small-credit educational programs similar to Micro-credentials within the framework of non-formal education centers and various organizations. Equally important is to mention that Georgia already has an experience in the development of micro-credentials in the field of formal education. From 2019, within the framework of vocational education, vocational training and retraining programmes are implemented, which are an excellent means of lifelong learning and can be considered as micro-credentials in professional development. These programmes help the interested individuals to master a new profession or upgrade their skills within an existing profession in a short period of time and enter the labor market. The minimum and maximum duration of programmes are not defined at the system level, although in common practice their average duration varies from one to six months. Admission requirement of training programmes is to have a minimum basic education, the minimum age is determined by the specifics of the programme, while the maximum age is not limited. Vocational training and retraining programmes after completion of which the graduate is granted a state-recognized certificate, are ensured by quality assurance mechanisms corresponding to international standards (authorization of programmes is carried out), and are reflected in levels 2, 3, 4, 5 of the National Qualifications Framework.

In Georgia, the work on the establishment of a micro-credentialing system in higher education was initiated by the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement (NCEQE) starting from 2020. Starting from this period, the Center was involved in the project of the Bologna Process Implementation Group's (BICG) Thematic Peer Group A on Qualifications Framework (TPG C on QA) - "MICROBOL - credentials linked to the Bologna Key Commitments". Since 2022, the Center has also been engaged in the work of the Micro-credentials quality assurance working group, which was initiated within the framework of the project "Implementation and innovation in quality assurance through peer learning" (IMINQA) implemented in partnership with the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

With the aim of considering the relevance of receiving feedback from stakeholders and aligning with the main recommendations of the Bologna Process, the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement has conducted a series of activities related to the recognition of micro-credentials and their representation in the formal education qualifications framework. To ensure this, in 2021 the Center conducted research aimed at collecting information for targeted collective monitoring and evaluation of the alignment of micro-credentials recognition with the main objectives, as well as assessing existing practices.

Based on the results of the survey, the majority of respondents felt the need to include micro-credentials in the legal framework, preferred the use of ECTS credits (instead of hours) to measure the volume of the programme, and considered the use of external quality assurance mechanisms important in this process. Almost half of the respondents noted the need to reflect the small-credit programmes in the framework of national qualifications. At this stage, such programmes are implemented by only a small part of the respondents (15%), although the majority (93%) expect that the demand for micro-credentials will increase in the future. (LEPL - National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement, 2021).

In relation to the formalization of micro-credentials, the surveyed institutions identified the following challenges:

- Improvement of the relevant legal framework;
- Absence of activity experience;
- Limited involvement of employers / low demand on the employment market;
- Low level of public awareness;
- Possibilities of recognition of learning outcomes achieved within the framework of non-formal education within the framework of formal education.

The highest education institutions of Georgia (Georgian Technical University, The University of Georgia), the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia, the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement, the Georgian Research and Educational Networking Association and various associations have been participating in the Erasmus+ funded project 'Micro-credentials for Higher Education Systems of Georgia and Armenia: South Caucasus Lighthouse Project (Micro-GEAR) since 2024.

The first work package of the project aims to explore and present a unified, structured representation of the region's established practices, policies, and regulatory frameworks related to micro-credentials, aligned with short-term-oriented educational activities. It aims to establish connections with activities oriented towards competencies, which have the potential to lead to micro-credentials, both formally recognized within educational frameworks and informally through acquired practices. This package also involves the identification and connection of interested parties in political domains, economic and social stakeholders interested in identifying and connecting with national educational systems concerning the integration of micro-credentials. Additionally, it initiates consultations with national stakeholders to establish a roadmap for the integration of micro-credentials in Georgia and Armenia.

Due to the differences in the higher education systems of Armenia and Georgia, the parties involved in the project have decided to develop different questionnaires depending on the specifications of the representing countries, which will define the practice and vision of the higher education system of the mentioned countries towards the implementation of microcredentials.

## II. Methodology

As the data collection method, a survey research was chosen.

### 2.1 Purpose of the survey

The purpose of the survey was to study practices and perspectives within the higher education system of Georgia regarding the integration of microcredentials, focusing on higher education institutions, training centers, and accredited professional associations.

With the purpose of studying existing practices in the context of integrating microcredentials into Georgia's higher education system, as part of the Micro-GEAR project, led the Georgian side to develop research instrument - a structured electronic questionnaire for higher educational institutions, training centers operating on their bases, and professional associations (for detailed information regarding the questionnaire, please refer to Appendix N1).

## 2.2. Selection

Considering the goals and objectives of the survey, participants were selected through targeted selection.

The questionnaire identified by the Armenian side of the Micro-GEAR project was sent to potential implementers of microcredentials in Armenia, including higher education institutions, associations, and non-formal education providers. Georgian side of the project also considered it reasonable to send the mentioned questionnaire to the above mentioned institutions.

The research was conducted within target groups, in particular, an identical electronic questionnaire was sent to:

A questionnaire designated by the Armenian partners of the Micro-GEAR project was sent to project participants in Armenia, targeting potential implementers of the highest education standards, associations, and non-formal education providers. The questionnaire was dispatched according to the objectives set by the Georgian side of the project for the aforementioned stakeholders.

The research was conducted within target groups, in particular, an identical electronic questionnaire was sent to:

- Authorized all higher education institutions in Georgia (63 in total);

- Non-formal education provider organizations operating on the basis of higher education institutions (4 organizations);
- Non-formal education providers with various profiles (17 organizations);
- Professional unions and associations (9 professional associations).

Sending the questionnaire to all higher education institutions was conditioned by the fact that, according to the results of the survey conducted by the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement in 2021, regarding the existing practice of microcredential system in the field of higher education, also aimed to establish a connection with the practice of microcredentials in the field of higher education institutions. Thus, sending the questionnaire to all authorized higher education institutions provided us with the opportunity to compare and analyze the results of the surveys conducted in 2021 and 2024.

The selected non-formal education provider organizations operating on the basis of higher education institutions focused more on practical aspects and implemented courses that were more relevant to the sphere of work and ongoing professional development. Particularly, these providers mainly offer certified courses in information and communication technologies, business, administration, as well as rural development. Among the selected non-formal education providers, priority was given to three public universities (Ilia State University, Georgian Technical University, National Defense Academy), as well as to several private higher education providers offering non-formal education.

Various non-formal education providers with diverse profiles have been selected, particularly focusing on human rights, civil society, ecology and environmental protection, as well as organizations working on labor issues. These organizations are actively engaged in offering courses related to languages, business, information and communication technologies, and are addressing the needs of the general population. Considering the importance of these areas not only in European countries but also in Georgia's higher education system, certification exams issued by the centers recognized internationally are required for achieving higher education goals. Also, it is noteworthy to mention that in the higher education system of



Georgia, there is a rich experience of recognizing language proficiency certificates issued by internationally recognized language centers for the purposes of higher education.

A diverse range of nine professional associations were also selected for the survey which are involved in the regulation of higher education and/or international standards compliance in various sectors such as justice, construction, environmental work, rural development, certification and auditing, and other related fields.

It is worth acknowledging that among the authorized 63 higher education institutions, 19 are public universities, 37 are private institutions, and 7 are religious higher education institutions. The designated questionnaire was distributed electronically to them via the document return system.

The survey was divided into three distinct blocks: the first block served to identify respondents and their qualifications for the conducted examinations; the second block examined the vision of the higher education institution in regard to the challenges associated with integration of microcredentials into the higher education system. The final, third block addressed the vision of higher education system towards microcredential delivery models aiming to explore their connection with optimal models.

The questionnaire for potential implementers of microcredentials was available from May 2nd to May 18th, 2024.

A total of 25 higher educational institutions participated in the survey, out of which 10 are public, 12 are private and 3 are Orthodox theological institutions. Two associations - Georgian Farmers' Association and Georgian Research and Educational Networking Association "GRENA" took part in the survey. The data was analyzed by the method of descriptive statistics, and the Microsoft Excel office program was used for data analysis.

### **III. Survey results**

The survey consisted of an electronic questionnaire (Appendix 1) which was distributed to accredited higher education institutions, training centers, and professional associations in Georgia. Response in the survey

was obtained from 27 respondents, including 18 higher education institutions/universities, six vocational colleges<sup>1</sup>, one college, and two professional associations. Among the respondents, there were ten LLCs, five JSCs, eight individual entrepreneurs, and two non-governmental organizations. It should be noted that in the 2021 survey, participation was obtained from 27 institutions as well, with slight differences in legal statuses and geographic distribution. Several questions were formulated differently but both researches displayed more or less the same tendency.

The following educational institutions participated in the 2024 survey<sup>2</sup>:

1. LEPL - Georgian Technical University
2. LEPL - Sokhumi State University
3. LEPL - Shota Meskhia State Teaching University of Zugdidi
4. LEPL Samtskhe-Javakheti State University
5. LEPL - David Aghmashenebeli National Defence Academy of Georgia
6. LEPL – Gori State Teaching University
7. LEPL - Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University
8. LEPL – Batumi Art Teaching University

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<sup>1</sup> Teaching University – a higher education institution implementing higher education programme/programmes (except for Doctoral programmes). A Teaching University necessarily implements the second cycle – Master's educational programme/programmes. <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/32830?publication=110>

<sup>2</sup> Two higher education establishments, Free University and the Agricultural University of Georgia, rejected to participate in the survey since they do not agree with the term -"microcredential". According to their statements, the term "microcredit" might be misleading, as it could imply a smaller credit, which contradicts the practical field of activity and challenges some general definitions in European Commission documents, stating that Micro-Credentials are approvals of knowledge and skills and may consist of a few ECTS credits. The ambiguity surrounding the name and content suggests the need for careful consideration on this issue.

Both universities suggest that the term Micro-Credentials should be translated as "Microqualification" or "Microcompetency," which might represent a part or a separate outcome of qualification or competency, providing higher education decision-makers/instructors with the opportunity to offer students/applicants additional microqualifications and competencies that, in turn, assist them in their work. Therefore, given that the previous research group discusses the translation of the term and its relevance to this statement and proposal, we believe that discussions on this topic should continue both at the national level and among international project partners.

9. LEPL - Iakob Gogebashvili Telavi State University
10. LEPL – Kutaisi International University (KIU)
11. LTD The University of Georgia
12. LTD Ken Walker International University
13. LTD - Caucasus University
14. LTD - Sulkhani-Saba Orbeliani University
15. N(N)LE GIPA – Georgian Institute of Public Affairs
16. LTD Free Academy of Tbilisi
17. LTD Business and Technology University
18. N(N)LE - New Vision University
19. LTD - Petre Shotadze Tbilisi Medical Academy
20. LTD- Kutaisi University
21. LTD –British University in Georgia
22. LTD –Georgian National University SEU
23. N(N)LE – Tbilisi Theological Academy and Seminary
24. N(N)LE – Batumi Theological Seminary of the Patriarchate of Georgia named after St. John the Theologian
25. N(N)LE Giorgi Mtatsmindeli Higher Educational Institution of Ecclesiastical Chant
26. Georgian Farmers' Association
27. Georgian Research and Educational Networking Association “GRENA”

As a result of analyzing the answers to the questionnaire following tendencies were revealed:

- a. The most acceptable definition of microcredentials is the following:
- b. Micro-credentials also known as small-credit programmes, are small-volume learning activities - courses that are recognized by many states. The purpose of micro-credentials is to equip a person with specific knowledge, skills and competencies that meet the needs of the social, cultural, personal and employment market. Micro-credentials is an effective tool for improving the skills in the workplace or beyond, applied by representatives of the employment market, educational

institutions and non-profit organizations, because this tool best and most effectively responds to the changing demands of the employment market. (European project MICROBOL, 2020)

(See Appendix 1, question 1). As it was already mentioned the majority of the respondents (27 out of 18 votes) supported the above definition.

It is important to note that according to the 2021 research report by the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement: "Study on the Existing Practices of the Micro-credentials System (MICROBOL) in Higher Education in Georgia," 75% of the surveyed higher education institutions supported the following definition as the best representation of the essence and purpose of Micro-credentials: informal education programs (with a small amount of credit) offered by accredited institutions, aimed at acquiring specific knowledge, skills, or competencies, and addressing societal, personal, cultural, or labor market needs, certified by a certificate issued by the educational institution. By comparing both texts, we can highlight 5 key points that are confirmed by both studies:

1. **Micro-credentials and small-credit programs:** Both texts discuss small-scale educational activities aimed at acquiring specific knowledge, skills, and competencies.
2. **Labor market demands:** Both texts indicate that these programs address labor market needs and assist employment market representatives.
3. **Recognition by educational institutions:** Both texts note that these programs are recognized by educational institutions and are certified with an appropriate certificate.
4. **Personal, social, and cultural needs:** Both texts emphasize that the programs are designed to respond to societal, personal, cultural, and labor market needs.
5. **Competency improvement on and off the job:** Both texts discuss that these programs are effective tools for enhancing qualifications, whether on the job or off.

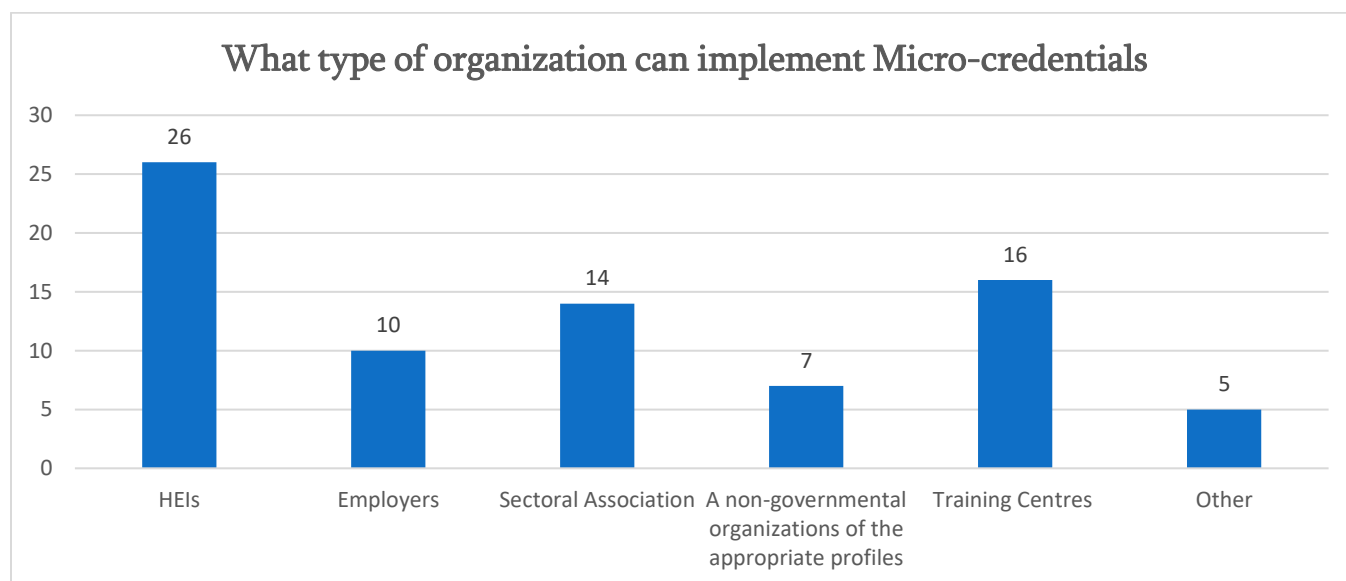
These points highlight the main similarities between the definitions provided in both studies, indicating that the relevance of the issue has not diminished over the years and that respondents correctly understand the essence and content of these programs.

It is noteworthy that the definition chosen by the majority of institutions in the 2021 questionnaire was an adapted version of the definition developed by the Bologna Process Implementation Group (BICG) Quality Assurance Thematic Expert Group (TPG C on QA) as part of the "MICROBOL - Micro-credentials linked to the Bologna Key Commitments" project. Additionally, in the current study, one of the options

provided in the questionnaire was the definition developed under this project, which, according to the majority of respondents, best represents the essence and purpose of Micro-credentials.

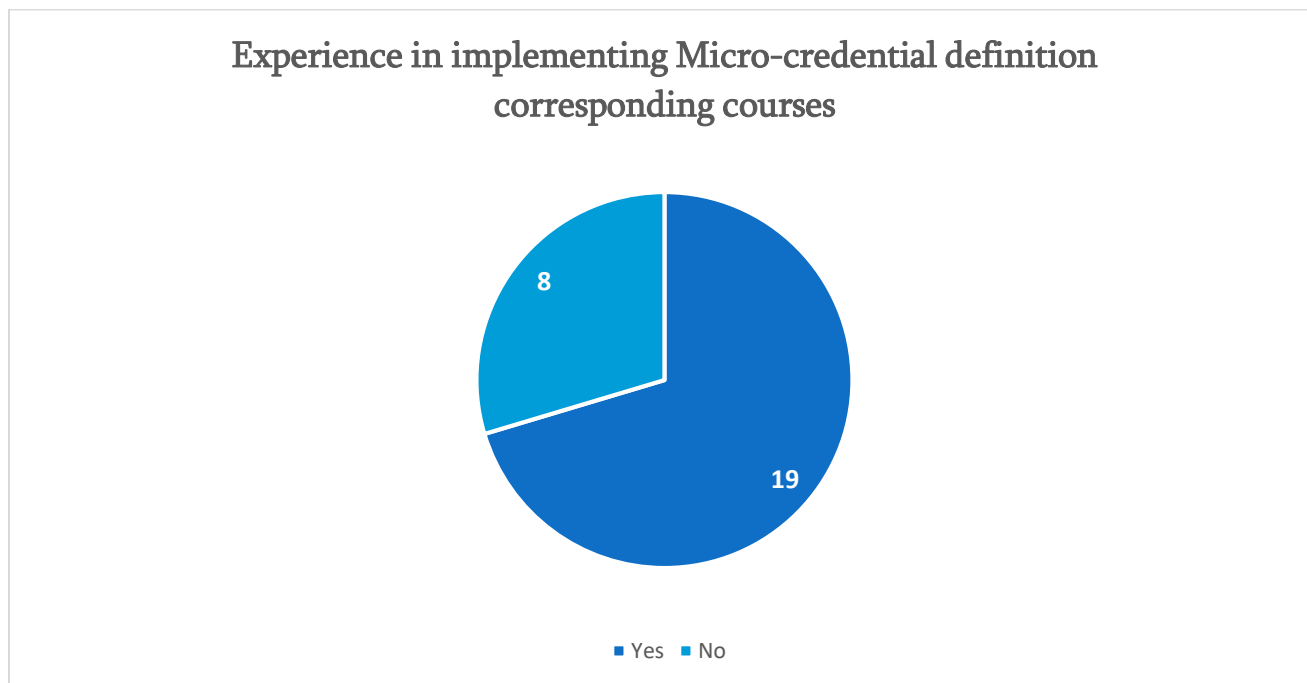
- c. An institution authorized to implement Micro-credentials may be a higher educational institution, a training center, or a sectoral association. Since there is no mechanism for recognizing non-formal education at Georgia's higher education system, it was expected that compared to employers, relevant non-governmental organizations, or other types of institutions, a higher educational institution would receive more support from respondents as an institution authorized to implement Micro-credentials.

**Diagram N1. What type of organization can implement Micro-credentials?**



- d. Among the respondents, the majority did not have formal or informal education in the context of implementing Micro-credentials. However, 30% of the respondents had such type of experience.

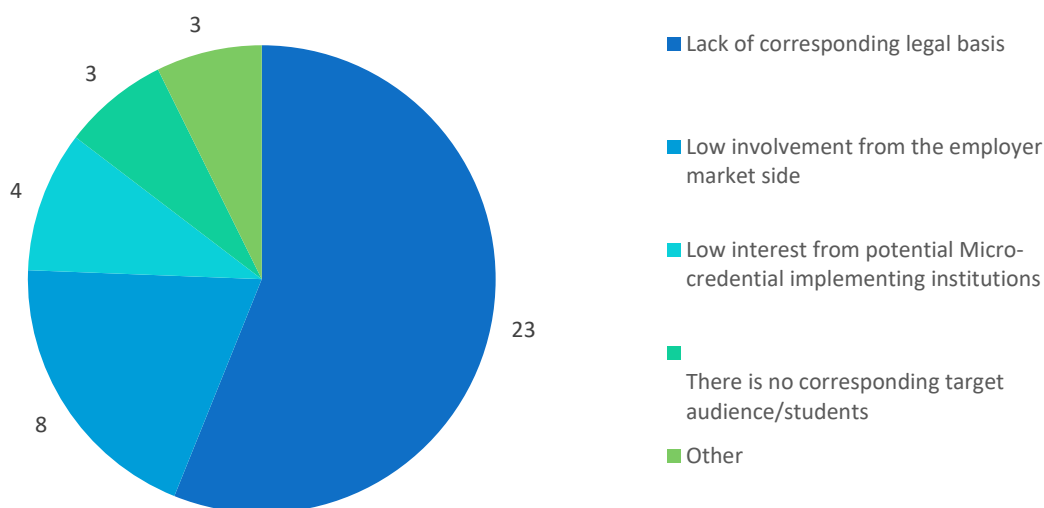
**Diagram N2. Experience in implementing Micro-credential definition corresponding courses in the surveyed higher education institutions.**



- e. The majority of respondents (26 out of 27 surveyed) agree to implement Micro-credential courses, provided that national legislation permits the provision and implementation of Micro-credits at the level of higher education, while one respondent does not have a response to this question. The challenges related to the implementation of such courses is as follows:

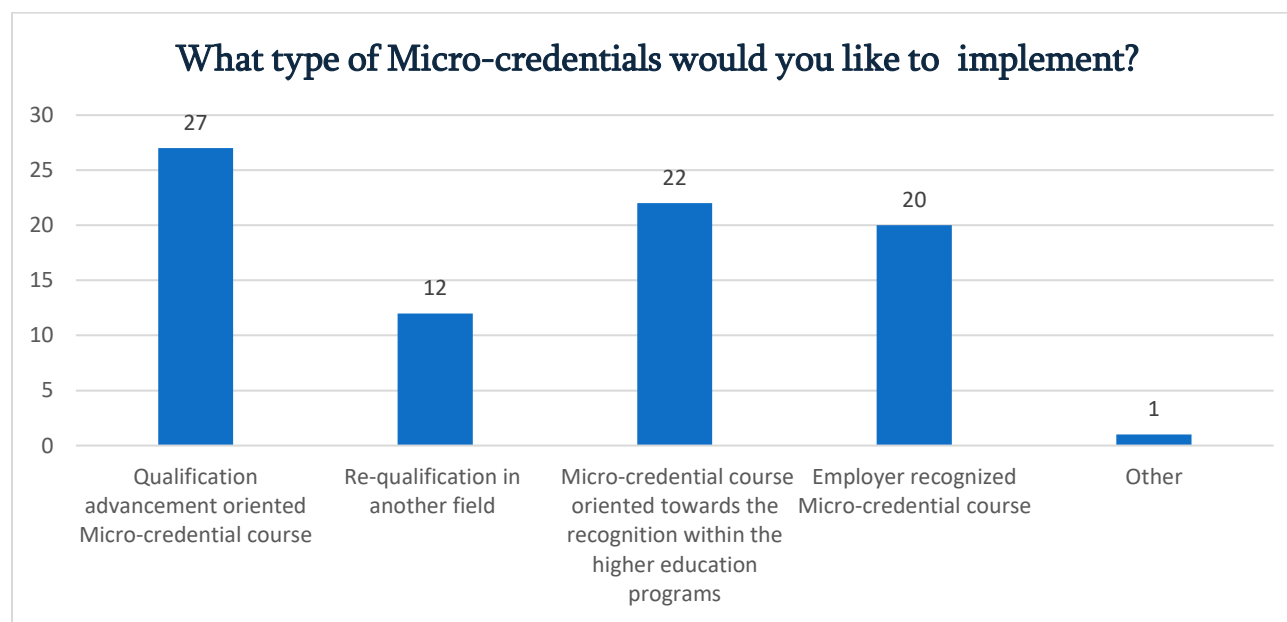
**Diagram N3 The main challenges for higher education institutions in implementing Micro-credential programs**

## The main challenges for higher education institutions in implementing Micro-credential programs



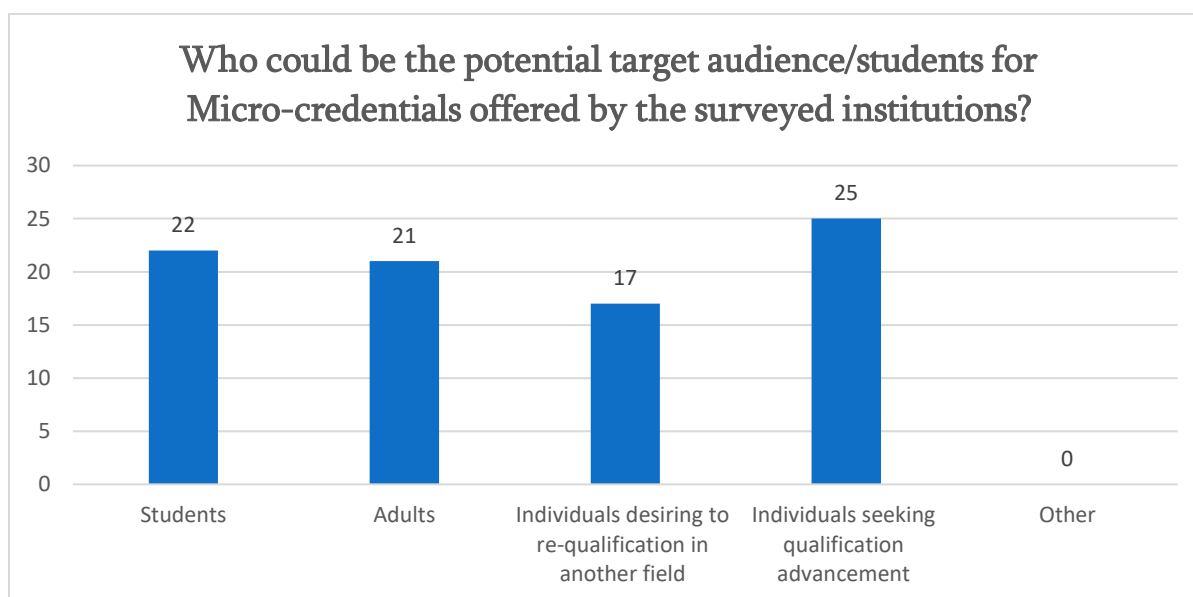
- e. Regarding the question to what type of Micro-credentials would they like to implement respondents were given possibility to choose from several options, their answers were following:

**Diagram N4 Types of Micro-credentials that higher education institutions would like to implement**



- f. Regarding the target audience for Micro-credential programs, respondents were given the opportunity to choose multiple answers, and the results were distributed among students, adults, individuals seeking to re-qualify in other fields, and those aiming for qualification advancement as follows:

**Diagram N5 Who could be the potential target audience/students for Micro-credentials offered by the surveyed institutions?**

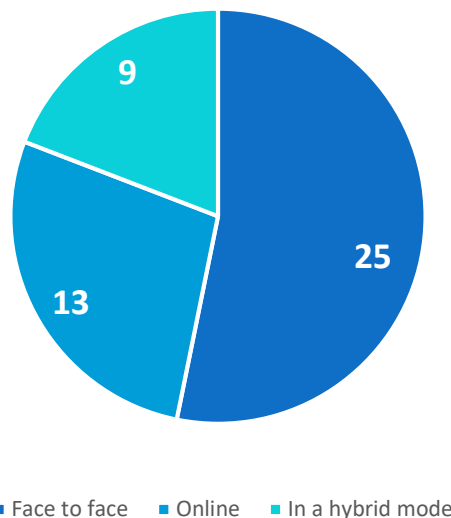


- g. Research revealed that the majority of respondents support Micro-credential studies in a hybrid method. A large portion prefers face-to-face studies, and minimal support goes to online studies.

**Diagram N6 The most optimal format for delivering Micro-credentials**



### The most optimal format for delivering Micro-credentials

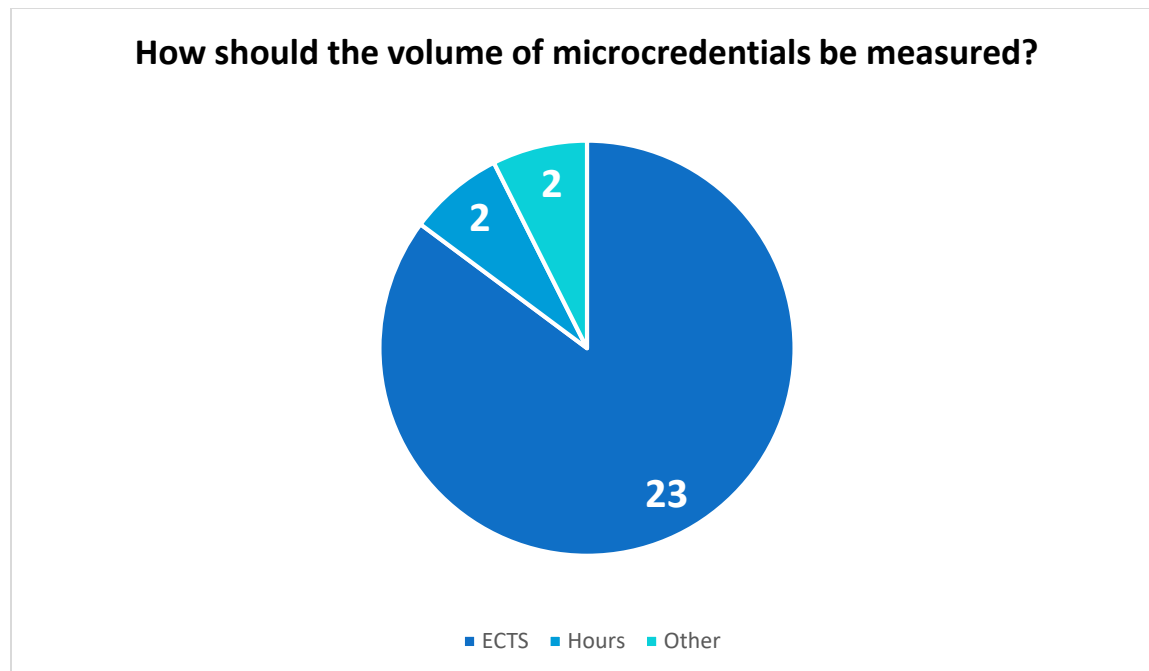


According to this distribution, we can determine several factors:

- **Emphasis on hybrid learning:** Considering the strong preference for hybrid learning, the implementation of a Micro-credential program that includes both in-person and online components is likely to be well received by the public. This form of education will be especially convenient for students living in the region.
  - **Ensuring flexibility:** The hybrid model should be a focal point, but it is also necessary to offer purely in-person or online options to meet specific preferences or needs.
  - **Allocation of resources:** Resources should be allocated towards developing a robust infrastructure for hybrid learning to ensure the effective integration of both in-person and online elements.
- h. The data shows that the majority of respondents support expressing the volume of Micro-credentials in ECTS credits. Implementing this method will likely meet the needs of the majority, ensure standardization, and provide compatibility with the European credit transfer system. Compared to this, other alternatives have relatively little support. Therefore, measuring the volume of Micro-credential

programs in ECTS credits has been determined as the most optimal model by the majority of respondents.

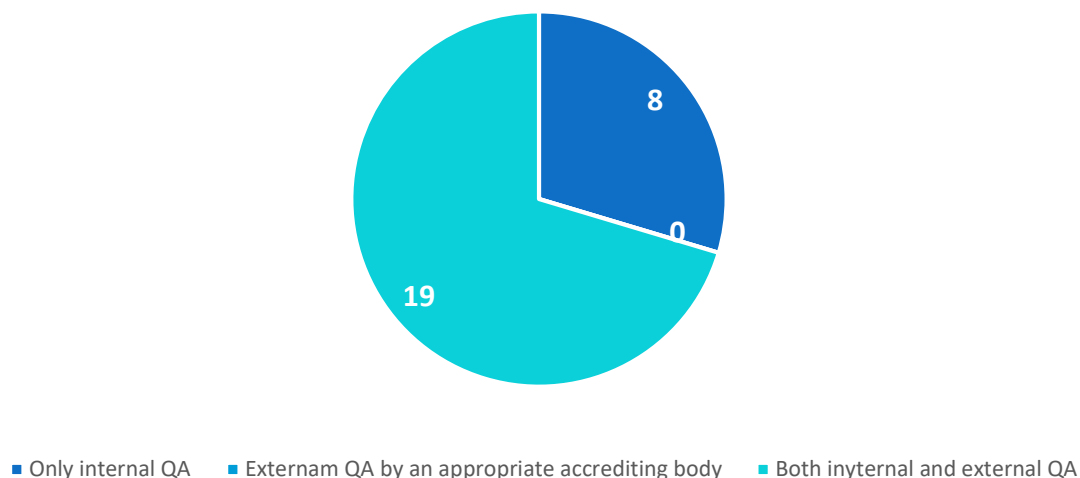
**Diagram N7 Measuring the credit load of Micro-credentials**



- i. In response to the question of what mechanism should exist for the implementation of Micro-credential programs, the majority of respondents indicated that there should be an internal and external quality assurance mechanism for Micro-credentials. Out of the respondents, 19 supported both internal and external quality assurance, 8 supported only internal quality assurance, and none supported external quality assurance. Although conclusions can be drawn from this result, the analysis of the question was conducted along with other open questions, which are discussed in point “j”.

**Diagram N8 Quality assurance of Micro-credentials**

**According to your institution's view, microcredentials should be subject to:**



This data differs from the results of the 2021 survey, according to which 1 out of 27 respondents (4%) indicated that the quality assurance of small credit programs should not take place, 14 respondents (52%) supported the external quality assurance mechanism, and 12 respondents (44%) indicated that the quality assurance of small credit programs should be carried out through the internal quality assurance mechanism of the institution.

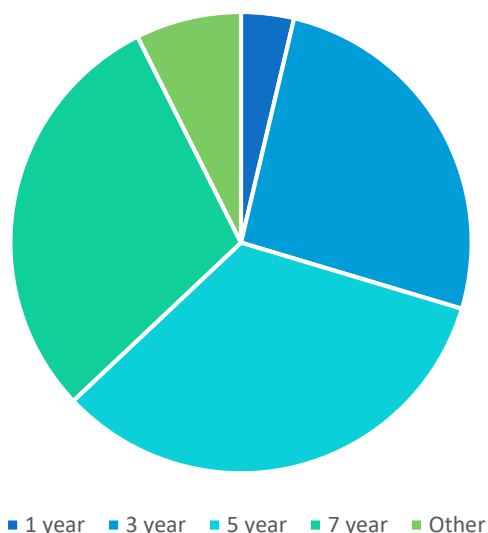
- j. To obtain the right to implement Micro-credentials, the optimal option is given in the questionnaire along with the above-mentioned question and two other open questions, namely: "1. Please describe your optimal option for obtaining the right to implement Micro-credentials; 2. Please briefly describe the most acceptable way for your institution to obtain the right to implement Micro-credentials." (These open questions were not answered by 4 respondents). It should be noted that out of these three questions, the first was multiple-choice, while the remaining two were open questions. Asking the question in this way had two purposes: 1. To verify how correctly and thoughtfully the opinion on this issue was expressed, and 2. To see if the respondents would suggest their opinions on the specific mechanisms for obtaining the right to implement Micro-credentials. Despite not having a numerically

exact match between the results of question 15 and the results of questions 16 and 17, the overall picture remains the same. The majority agrees that the most correct approach and form to enable the implementation of a Micro-credential program is the presence of both internal and external quality assurance mechanisms. This is not surprising, as the study mainly involved higher education institutions, for whom the existing pathway for academic programs is understandable and practically implementable. Consequently, a similar model appears to be envisaged for Micro-credential programs. Notably, in question 16, one respondent indicated that the most acceptable way for the institution to implement Micro-credentials is that if an academic program undergoes accreditation, a Micro-credential program can be developed from the already accredited program—meaning the program can be divided into various Micro-credential programs for different purposes.

- k. Based on the data collected, in response to the question: "In your institution's opinion, for how many years should it be possible to obtain the right to implement a Micro-credential program?" 9 out of 27 respondents supported five years, 8 supported seven years, 7 supported three years, 1 supported one year, and 2 did not support any of the mentioned periods. During analysis, the time frames were divided into three categories: long-term, intermediate, and short-term periods. We grouped 5 and 7 years into long-term, 3 years was defined as an intermediate period, and 1 year as a short-term period. The data shows that the majority of respondents prefer a longer option for obtaining the right to implement Micro-credential programs (5 and 7 years). This preference is likely due to the longer period representing and potentially signifying a desire for stability and long-term planning. Additionally, 7 years is the duration for program accreditation, and 6 years is the duration for institutional authorization. Institutions might want to obtain implementation rights within the cluster accreditation or institutional authorization process. Therefore, the preference for longer periods can likely be explained by these factors.

**Diagram N9 For how many years should it be possible to obtain permission to implement Micro-credential program?**

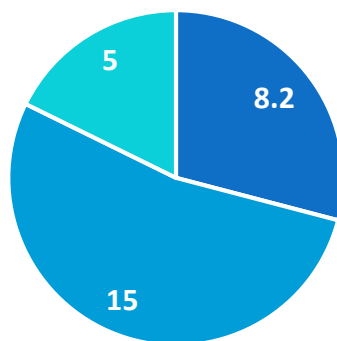
**For how many years should it be possible to obtain permission to implement Micro-credential program?**



1. According to the data, the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement was identified as the authorized body for the recognition of Micro-credentials, indicating a desire for standardization and centralization of quality assurance. However, there is also significant support for delegating this authority to Micro-credential provider institutions, which suggests a need for autonomy and flexibility. Considering diverse perspectives from the "other" category could improve the complexity and effectiveness of the recognition system.

**Diagram N10 Which authority/agency/institution should be empowered to recognize Micro-credentials, including those obtained abroad?**

**In your Opinion which authority/agency/institution should be empowered to recognize Micro-credentials, including those obtained abroad?**

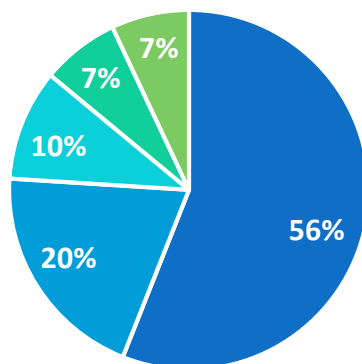


■ Institutions implementing Micro-credentials ■ LEPL –National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement ■ Other

- m. The survey results reveal that the main challenge in implementing Micro-credential programs is the lack of an appropriate legal framework, followed by the low involvement of employment market representatives. Smaller challenges include a lack of institutional interest and a target audience. These problems can be addressed primarily by establishing a legal framework, increasing collaboration/involvement with employers, and attracting the target audience. These steps will significantly improve and facilitate the implementation of Micro-credential programs.

**Diagram N11 The main challenges facing your institution for the implementation of Micro-credential programs**

Please indicate what are the main challenges for your institution for the implementation of Micro-credential programs? (you may select more than one answer)

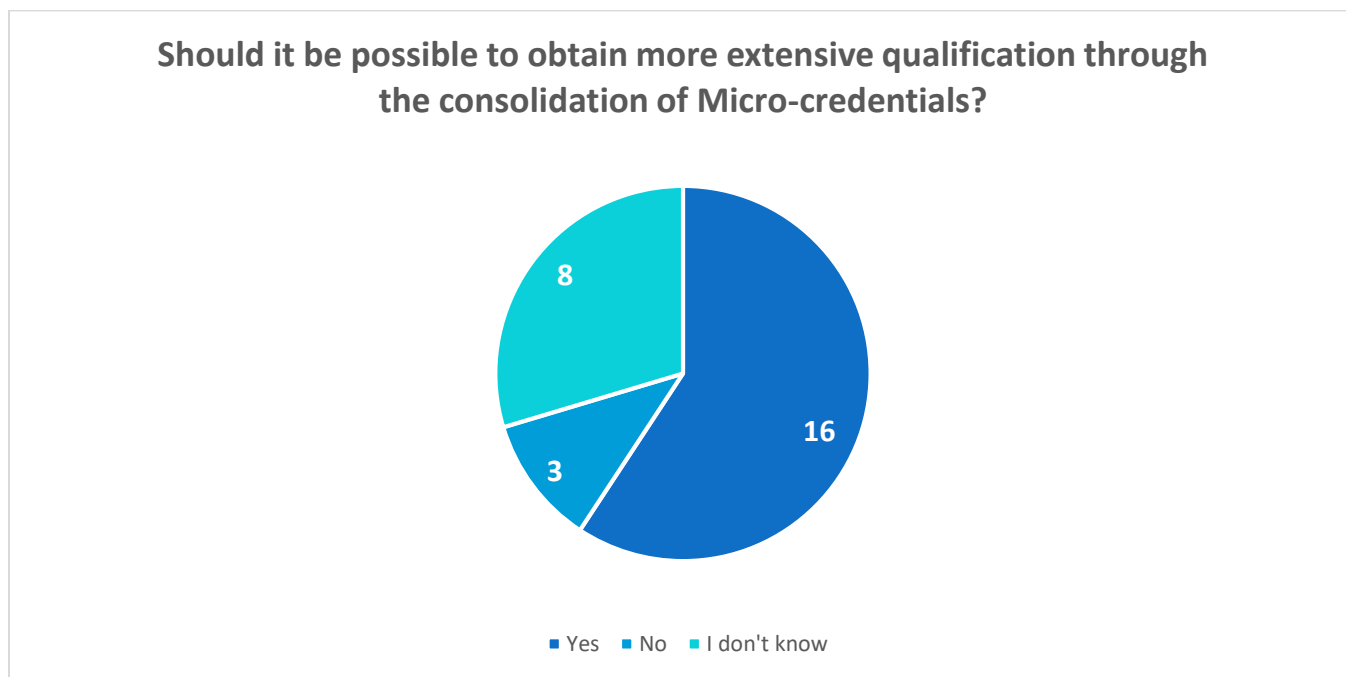


- Absence of relevant legal framework
- Low involvement of labor market representatives
- Low Interest from the side of potential implementing institutions of Micro-credentials
- Absence of Adequate target audience/students
- other

- n. Out of 27 respondents, 16 supported the idea of combining Micro-credentials to obtain a broader qualification. However, 3 respondents disagreed with this statement, and 8 respondents were unsure. Nearly 30% of the respondents did not have an answer to this question, suggesting that the concept of combining Micro-credentials for broader qualifications might not be fully understood. To clarify this issue, it is important to create clear standards and guidelines for the consolidation process of Micro-credentials, ensure quality assurance mechanisms for combining Micro-credentials into broader qualifications, and increase awareness and understanding among students and stakeholders. Balancing the flexibility of Micro-credentials with strict quality standards can create a robust system that meets the needs of modern learners while maintaining the integrity of qualifications.
- o. Through the consolidation of Micro-credential programs, achieving a broader qualification from the perspective of 27 respondents out of 27, of which 16 have explicitly agreed, while 3 disagreed with the statement "no," and 8 respondents did not provide a response to the question. Approximately

30% of the respondents do not have an answer to the question asked. Therefore, it is possible to assume that not all respondents fully understand what Micro-credential consolidation means for broader qualification objectives. For clarity on this issue, it is important to establish clear standards and guidelines for the consolidation process of Micro-credential programs, ensure mechanisms for quality assurance of Micro-credentials for a wider qualification combination, increase awareness and understanding among educators and stakeholders. The establishment of a robust system with balanced standards of flexibility and quality in the Micro-credential granting and quality process can create a strong framework that meets the needs of diverse learners.

**Diagram N12 Should it be possible to obtain more extensive qualification through the consolidation of Micro-credentials?**



- p. According to the majority view of the respondents, there should exist a unified database/registry in the country regarding the Micro-credentials available. They consider that such a unified database/registry should contain information such as: the name of Micro-credential programs, the providers'



determinations, the titles of programs, the workload in hours/ECTS credits, the form of delivery, learning outcomes, objectives, and the level of national qualifications framework and others.

Inclusion of Micro-credential programs in a unified database/registry enables easier access to information about the programs' contents, evaluation methods used, as well as information about other determinations/providers/employers regarding recognition and the processes of quality assurance of Micro-credentials used in the framework of Micro-credential programs. Usually, this is conditioned by the fact that everyone involved in the credit allocation process adheres to high standards of assessment and relates the acquired knowledge with the objectives of the program with a high percentage of relevance.

q. In the case of legislative approval for the implementation of Micro-credential programs at the higher education level, the following fields have been identified as the most appropriate for the implementation of Micro-credential programs:

- Modern digital, information, and communication technologies
- Law
- Social and behavioral sciences
- Education administration
- Business administration, management, marketing, tourism
- Finance and banking
- Engineering and technical sciences
- Philology, foreign languages
- Journalism and information
- Agriculture and food processing, ichthyology - aquaculture; animal husbandry
- Healthcare
- Arts and related fields

## **IV. Findings of the Report Based on the Survey Results Related to the Implementation of Micro-credential Programs:**

### **4.1 Definition of Micro-credentials:**

The majority of respondents supported the following definition of Micro-credentials: Micro-credentials, also known as small-credit programs, are small-scale educational activities—courses—that can be implemented or recognized by accredited institutions. The purpose of Micro-credentials is to equip individuals with specific knowledge, skills, and competencies that address social, cultural, personal, and labor market demands. Micro-credentials are an effective tool for enhancing qualifications both on and off the job, used by employers, educational institutions, and non-profit organizations to effectively respond to the changing demands of the labor market.

#### **a. Authorized institutions for the implementation of Micro-credential programs**

The majority of respondents believe that the institutions authorized to implement Micro-credential programs should be higher education institutions, training centers, or sectoral associations. There was less support for employers, relevant non-governmental organizations, or other types of institutions.

#### **b. Preference for hybrid learning**

The data shows that the majority of respondents support hybrid learning, which includes both in-person and online components. This indicates a high preference for hybrid learning, necessitating the allocation of resources and the provision of flexible learning options.

### **c. ECTS credit priorities**

The data indicates that the majority of respondents support the inclusion of Micro-credential activities in ECTS credits for recognition. This method ensures standardization and compatibility with the practices of higher education in Europe.

### **d. Internal and External Quality Assurance**

The majority of respondents believe that Micro-credential programs should adhere to both internal and external quality assurance mechanisms. Only a small portion focuses solely on internal quality assurance, while none of the respondents exclusively emphasized external mechanisms.

### **e. Duration of the programs**

The majority of respondents prioritize Micro-credential programs with long durations (5 and 7 years). This indicates a desire for stability and long-term planning. Additionally, there is support for a five-year period, which is considered both average and optimal.

### **f. Authorized body for recognition of Micro-credentials**

The data shows that the authorized organization for Micro-credential issuance mainly reflects the quality of education at the national level. However, it is also crucial to highlight the significant support provided by Micro-credential providers towards educational institutions, indicating a need for autonomy and capacity-building.

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### **g. Main challenges**

The data shows that the main challenge in implementing Micro-credential programs is the absence of an appropriate legal framework. The second major challenge is the low involvement of employment market representatives, while minor challenges include a lack of institutional interest and a limited target audience.

### **h. Obtaining broad qualifications through consolidation**

The majority of respondents support obtaining broad qualifications through the consolidation of micro-credits. However, a significant minority either opposes this idea or has an unclear position on the matter.

### **i. Unified database/register of Micro-credentials**

The majority of respondents support the existence of the unified database/registry for Micro-credentials, which would improve the transparency and recognition of Micro-credential programs.

The survey results indicate a great potential for the implementation of Micro-credential programs if appropriate legal foundations will be established by Georgian legislation for the implementation of such programs at the higher education level. Additionally, the development of internal and external quality assurance mechanisms, as well as active collaboration between implementing institutions and employment market representatives, is crucial. It is also important that Micro-credential programs will be flexible and standardized to facilitate their broad recognition and use.

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## Appendix 1

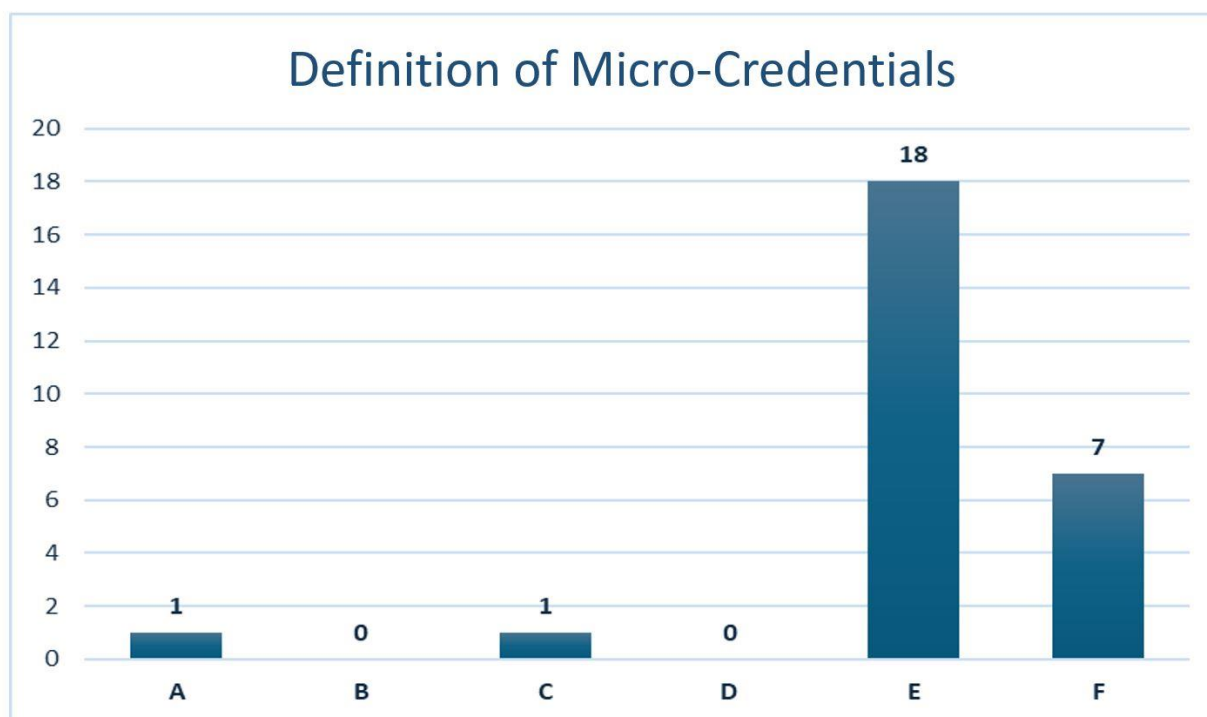
### Questionnaire on the current practices of Micro-credential systems at higher education sector in Georgia, aimed at studying the viewpoints of potential implementers

#### 1. Please select the most suitable definition of microcredentials for you:

- A. The Micro-credentials as records of the learning outcomes that a learner has acquired following a small volume of learning, while these learning outcomes will have been assessed against transparent and clearly defined criteria. (European Commission, 2021).
- B. Micro-credentials is a learning activity with an associated credential which recognises a skill or competency that has been acquired through an organised learning process and validated through an assessment. (OECD, 2021).
- C. Micro-credentials are credentials that verify, validate, and attest that specific skills and/or competencies have been achieved. They differ from traditional degrees and certificates in that they are generally offered in shorter or more flexible timespans and tend to be more narrowly focused.” (State University of New York, 2021, 10).
- D. Micro-credentials are digital certification of assessed knowledge, skills and competencies in a specific area or field which can be a component of an accredited programme or stand-alone courses supporting the professional, technical, academic and personal development of the learners. (Malaysian Qualification Agency, 2020).
- E. Micro-credentials are small-volume learning activities - courses that can be implemented or recognized by higher education institutions. The purpose of micro-credentials is to equip a person with specific knowledge, skills and competencies that meet the needs of the social, cultural, personal and employment market. Micro-credentials is an effective tool for improving the skills in the workplace or beyond, applied by representatives of the employment market, educational

institutions and non-profit organizations, because this tool best and most effectively responds to the changing demands of the employment market. (European project MICROBOL, 2020)

F. Micro-credential is documented affirmation of learning outcomes assessment and certification in the formal education sector, typically representing a small portion of educational activity within structured systems. Micro-credentials may constitute a standalone minor qualification or combine with other micro-credentials for broader qualification objectives (National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement , 2023).



2. In your opinion, what type of institution can be authorized to implement Micro-credits? (You may select more than one answer)

A. Higher education institution

- B. Employer
- C. Professional associations
- D. Non-governmental organization of the corresponding profile
- E. Training center
- F. Other

**3. Have you ever had experience in implementing courses within the framework of formal or non-formal education that encounter with definition of Micro-credential?**

- A. Yes
- B. No

**4. If you answer to the previous question is positive, please briefly describe your experience in implementing courses in formal or non-formal education corresponding to the definition of Micro-credentials.**

**5. Please indicate, In case if national legislation permits the implementation of Micro-credential programs at higher education level, would you favour or not prefer the implementation of such small-scale educational programs?**

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Do not know



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- 6. Please choose, what type of Micro-credential practices would you prefer to implement? (You may select more than one answer)**
- A. Micro-credential course oriented towards qualification advancement
  - B. Micro-credential course focused on re-qualification in another field
  - C. Micro-credential course oriented towards the recognition within the higher education programs
  - D. Employer recognized Micro-credential course
  - E. Other
- 7. Who could be the potential target audience (students) for Micro-credentials offered by you? (You may select more than one answer)**
- A. Students
  - B. Adults
  - C. Individuals desiring to re-qualification in another field
  - D. Individuals seeking qualification advancement
  - E. Other
- 8. Please specify the most optimal format for delivering Micro-credentials. (You may select more than one answer)**
- A. Face- to-face
  - B. Online
  - C. Hybrid
- 9. Based on the preferences of your organization, how should the volume of the Micro-credentials be measured?**

- A. Hours
- B. ECTS credits
- C. Other

**10. How many hours/credits should be the minimum and maximum volume for Micro-credentials?**  
**(Please respond in the following format, e.g., MIN-1 - MAX-5)**

**11. According to your institution's view, Micro-credentials should be subject to:**

- A. Only internal quality assurance
- B. External quality assurance by an appropriate accrediting body
- C. Both internal and external quality assurance

**12. Please describe the optimal version for you to obtain the right of implementing Micro-credentials.**

**13. Please briefly describe the most suitable way for your organization to obtain the right of implementing Micro-credentials.**

**14. In your organizations' point of view, for how many years should it be possible to obtain permission to implement Micro-credential program?**

- A. For a period of 1 year
- B. For a period of 3 years
- C. For a period of 5 years
- D. For a period of 7 years
- E. Other

**15. In your opinion, what criteria should an institution meet to be granted the right to implement Micro-credential programs in the relevant sector?**

**16. In your opinion, which authority/agency/institution should be empowered to recognize Micro-credentials, including those obtained abroad?**

- A. Institution implementing Micro-credentials
- B. (LEPL) National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement
- C. Other

**17. Please indicate what are the main challenges facing your institution for the implementation of Micro-credential programs? (You may select more than one answer)**

- A. Absence of relevant legal framework
- B. Low involvement of labor market representatives
- C. Low interest from the side of potential implementing institutions of Micro-credentials
- D. Absence of adequate target audience/students
- E. Other

**18. In your opinion should it be possible to obtain more extensive qualification through the consolidation of Micro-credentials?**

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Do not know

**19. In your opinion should there be an unified database/registry regarding the available Micro-credentials in the country?**

- A. Yes

- B. No
- C. Do not know

**20. What type of information should be included in the unified database/registry regarding Micro-credential programs? (You may select more than one answer)**

- A. Title of Micro-credential
- B. Designation of the implementing institution / provider name
- C. Micro-credential providing country
- D. The level of national qualification framework
- E. Objective
- F. Learning outcome/outcomes
- G. Implementation method (face-to-face, hybrid/online)
- H. Language of implementation
- I. Volume of hours/ECTS credits
- J. Evaluation gained within the framework of Micro-credentials
- K. Type of quality assurance processes used within the framework of the Micro-credentials (including the accreditation and expiration dates, where relevant)
- L. Information regarding the assessment methods used within the framework of the Micro-credentials.
- M. Information on the prerequisites for obtaining the Micro-credential
- N. Information on the higher education program within which the microcredit can be recognized
- O. Information on the possibilities of recognition by other organizations/providers/employers
- P. Information on combining with other Micro-credentials for broader qualification purposes
- Q. Additional Information (if necessary)
- R. Other

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**21. In case if the legislation allows the implementation of Micro-credential programs at the higher education level, please specify the fields in which it is most appropriate to implement such Micro-credential programs.**