



**“MICRO-GEAR MICRO-CREDENTIALS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION  
SYSTEMS OF GEORGIA AND ARMENIA:  
SOUTH CAUCASUS LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT”**

**Project #101127144**

**“Analysis of Existing Micro-Credential Practices in Higher  
Education System of Armenia”**

**WP1: D1.1. Report on Regional Micro-Credentials Status-Quo Study  
Armenia**

**Yerevan, 2024**

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## Abbreviations

EC	European Commission
EUCO	Council of the European Union (EU)
ANQF	Armenian National Qualifications Framework
QF EHEA_	Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area
LRC	Lisbon Recognition Convention
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
VET	Vocational Education and Training
HEI	Higher Education Institution
GA	Government of Armenia
YSU	Yerevan State University Foundation
CENS-NAS	Centre for Ecological-Noosphere Studies of NAS RA
MoESCS.	Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of the Republic of Armenia
ANQA	National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation
EIU	Eurasia International University
ArmENIC	National Information Centre for Academic Recognition and Mobility

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## Introduction

The Micro-GEAR project supports structural reforms in the higher education sector of the South Caucasus region, primarily focusing on Georgia and Armenia, to introduce and facilitate the broad proliferation of micro-credentials as a tool for improving the relevance, quality and flexibility of higher education. In line with the EUCO Recommendation on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability (adopted on 16.06.2022), the project will update the National Qualifications Frameworks in Armenia and Georgia, build national consensus over principles of micro-credentialing, stimulate educational activities leading to micro-credentials, ensure their quality and facilitate their recognition. To justify the suggested reforms by providing feedback on the policy level, and to promote the implementation of micro-credentials, the project will implement a pilot programme covering the capacity building on micro-credentials and the development of educational units leading to micro-credentials. Finally, the project dissemination and sustainability activities will spread the obtained results to all relevant education and training providers in the beneficiary countries and wider regions.

The Georgian and Armenian project partners involved are the Ministries of Education, National Accreditation Agencies and ENIC Centers, representatives of HEIs, and training providers. On the European side, the project consortium includes 3 HEIs, the Italian ENIC-NARIC Centre and a quality assurance expert company. The report is developed 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 Armenia, focusing on their design and delivery, assessment and certification, as well as analysing the existing practices in the two countries related to academic and professional recognition, identification of challenges, and prospects for development.

The prospectives of micro-credentials has been recognized by the EUCO, which in May 2022, adopted the proposal for a Council Recommendation on a European approach to micro-credentials to promote lifelong learning and employment. The recommendation of the EUCO defines the framework for the development, implementation, and recognition of micro-credentials in the EU. It calls on Member States and stakeholders to cooperate in the direction of ensuring high-quality micro-credentials, respecting standards, and increasing accessibility. This recommendation aims to support the building of trust in micro-credentials across EU among all those involved, whether providers or beneficiaries.

In the EHEA context a micro-credential is a small volume of learning that is certified by a qualification and is offered by a HEI or is recognised by an institution using procedures in line of LRC or recognition of prior learning, where applicable. Micro-credentials are designed to provide learners with specific knowledge, skills and competences that respond to personal, societal and labour market needs. Learning outcomes are defined at NQF levels, the workload is indicated in ECTS credits and are subject to quality assurance. By joining the Bologna Process, Armenia and Georgia committed to carry out self-

certification of the NQFs against the EHEA-QF. In 2024 Tirana Communique ministers committed to foster flexible, quality-assured and recognised learning pathways, including micro-credentials.

The WP1 of the Micro-GEAR project aims to study and present a unified, structured report of the practices, policies, and regulatory frameworks related to micro-credentials, aligned with short-term-oriented educational activities existing in the South Caucasus region. 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, and 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.

To achieve the objective, studies were carried in Armenia and Georgia covering the existing policies related to micro-credentials, and the possibilities of their integration in the national higher education systems.

### **Policy background in Armenia**

The "State Education Development Plan of the Republic of Armenia until 2030" defines priority areas for development of the national educational system, including the development of complimentary education and micro-credentials. To introduce micro-credentials the 2030 State Education Programme defines the following goals.

1. To increase the number of the modular programmes of professional education, training and complimentary short-term courses to improve and upgrade the capacities of employees for the priority economic area.
2. To develop a legal framework and methodology for training organizations offering non-formal complimentary educational courses by ensuring proper implementation of the stages, in particular needs assessment, guaranteeing the programme and monitoring of the process, recognition of achievements, certification, crediting, registration in a national register of trainings.
3. Evaluation, recognition, certification, crediting of the achievements of non-formal, informal learning, acquired skills and competences of an individual, registration in a national register.
4. Creation of a national register of training for complimentary educational programmes and courses, including information on training providers, names of assessed and certified learners, their achievements. Similar to the worldwide tendencies, the rapidly developing economy and the labour market of Armenia requires continuous self-education by acquiring up-to-date knowledge. In this regard,

the 2030 State Education Programme also defines a precise action, namely: "It is planned to introduce a system of an evaluation, recognition, and certification of non-formal and informal learning results, to strengthen the processes of organization and implementation of additional educational programmes"

<https://escs.am/files/files/2023-02-13/24f4e5a9401631c711a946eb640ae734.pdf>

Also, the document might serve as a guideline for creation and implementation of an effective framework of quality assurance of micro-credentials by putting into operation mechanisms that will ensure more flexible learning and recognition of the achievements of the learners. Nevertheless, the document lacks a definition of micro-credentials.

Complimentary education is defined in Article 26 of the Law on Education:

- Complimentary programmes are implemented to meet the educational needs of citizens and society. The main goal of these programmes within each level of education is continuous improvement of an individual's professional competences.
- Complimentary education is carried out in educational institutions of general, professional, and complimentary education and through individual pedagogical activities and it is regulated by the Government of the RA.

Presently, the Government launched consultations on the Draft Law on Higher Education and Science. These consultations can facilitate development of the legal framework for micro-credentials as well as buildout the concept and definition of the term. These would definitely facilitate implementation of the Micro-Gear project.

Thus, there is no national legislation related to micro-credentials and there is no common definition of the term. In HEIs of Armenia, the term is not well-known. Nevertheless, Armenian universities are offering various type of short courses and some of them may correspond the criteria of micro-credential programs or courses as commonly defined across the EU. For the Armenian universities short courses are an additional source of revenue and usually these are preparatory courses, postgraduate and professional development courses. Some of the universities as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic started to offer online short courses which are usually advertised on their official websites.

In 2022, the Government of Armenia passed a new regulation allowing Armenian HEIs and accredited organizations to issue certificates of a 30 ECTS professional training course for teachers: The certificate allows recipients to fill high demand of teachers in public schools located in high-mountainous and border regions of Armenia. Since then 4 Armenian universities as well as few private training organizations got a license from the MoESCS to provide the teacher training course which is well-fitting the definition of "micro-credential". The information about the course is published on the institutional websites and it also includes information about recognition of the certificate awarded.

Various type of short courses are also offered by scientific organizations, private companies, NGOs, and others. At the end of the offered short courses, certificates are issued that include information on hours and brief overview of content. It is a popular form of education among employers and educators to fill gaps of university education in Armenia and meet demand of the ever-changing labour market. This is a potential field for the development of micro-qualifications which requires further research.

For example, the CENS-NAS is offering degree programmes as well as separate courses within its UNESCO Chair "Education for Sustainable Development". Eurasia International University, co-financed by the DAAD, summer, and winter schools on various human rights and security issues were regularly organized, and the credits awarded to the participating students of leading Armenian and European universities are also reflected in the certificate awarded to them (3 ECTS credits, 90 academic hours).

In Armenia, the courses offered by the training centres of various organizations (including those related to popular IT companies) are quite popular. For example, the Armenian Code Academy (ACA), a technology education centre that aims to educate and train future and current technology professionals in the most sought-after IT professions, filling the gap in the labour market, has had more than 10,000 graduates from the regions and Yerevan (Source: <https://armenpress.am/hy/article/1124273>). It should be noted that this figure is comparable to the number of students studying IT specialities in the Armenian HEIs. Another example is Picsart an Armenian-American technology company that has established its academy offering comprehensive courses blend of technology and education. These are professional courses with duration of one year and usually the successful graduates are offered jobs in the same company or other IT companies in Armenia. <https://picsartacademy.am/>. Generally, micro-credential programmes implemented by different companies and non-university organisations face the recognition problem.

Micro-credentials can be recognized either for further education or employment. In 2023 Armenian ENIC conducted a study to understand whether Armenian HEIs award micro-credentials and what type of information is provided to the public about these type of courses.

So far, short courses offered by the universities do not carry any credits. Usually, at the end of a course, a certificate of attendance is awarded mentioning its duration. The exception is the American University of Armenia which has a well-developed system of offering public extension courses. The information regarding the courses is transparently provided on the official website of the university and the description contains learning outcomes, the purpose of a course, and credits allocated.

These points stipulated by the law, as well as the Erasmus+ Micro-GEAR (Micro-credentials for the higher education system of Armenia and Georgia) project, are aimed at the development of quality assurance mechanisms for micro-credentials, digitalization of quality assurance processes, adaptation of the European approach of quality assurance of joint programmes, self-certification of the ANQF, introduction of short cycle higher education qualifications.



It will contribute to the improvement of higher education and increase flexibility, expand opportunities for lifelong learning. As already mentioned, micro-credentials are not yet defined in the national legislation, but the intention of the project is to propose required regulations related to micro-credentials resulting which will result in revision of the ANQF. Establishment of quality assurance mechanisms of these educational programmes will facilitate recognition of micro-credentials.

Micro-credentials are also implemented in the framework of professional education and training. These programmes help individuals to master a new profession or upgrade their skills within an existing profession in a short period and enter the labour market. The minimum duration of programmes is not defined by the national legislation, although in common practice, their duration varies from one to six months. Usually, basic education is required for admission and there is no age limitation. VET programmes upon completion of which graduates are awarded a state-recognized certificate, are ensured by quality assurance mechanisms corresponding to international standards (authorization of programmes is carried out) and correspondent to Level 3, 4 and 5 of the ANQF.

Since 2020 Armenia, coherent to the EHEA developments, is working on micro-credentials. During 2020-2024 Armenian representatives participated in EHEA Thematic Peer working groups on QA, Recognition and QFs as well as and in working group on Teaching and Learning, contributing to research and developments on micro-credentials across Europe. Additionally, Armenia co-chairs the Working Group on Micro-Credentials within TPG on QA.

Since 2021, ANQA has been involved in the Micro-Credentials Quality Assurance Working Group, launched as part of the "Implementation and Innovation in Quality Assurance through Peer Learning" (IMINQA) project, in collaboration with the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). ANQA is also represented on the ENQA Board, playing an active role in discussions and developments related to micro-credentials.

As part of the TPG A activities, a SWOT analysis was conducted to assess the current situation in Armenia. Based on the analysis, a survey was created and implemented, and the results of the survey were discussed with the European partners.

Concerning the formalization of micro-credentials, the surveyed institutions identified the following challenges:

- Improvement of the relevant legal framework.
- Absence of experience.
- Limited involvement of employers and the low demand in market.
- Low level of public awareness.
- Lack of procedures for recognition of non-formal education.

## I. Methodology

For data collection on micro-credentials the project team decided to carry a survey in Armenia and Georgia. Due to the differences in the higher education systems of Armenia and Georgia, the parties involved in the project decided to develop different questionnaires depending on the specifications of the representing countries, which will define the practice and vision of the national HE systems towards implementation of micro-credentials.

### 2.1 Purpose of the survey

The purpose of the survey was to study practices and perspectives within the HE system of Armenia regarding the integration of micro-credentials, focusing on HEIs, training centres, and professional associations. A questionnaire was developed by the Armenian Team which was circulated to the HEIs, training centres and professional association. In total the number of the participants was 50 (for detailed information regarding the questionnaire, please refer to Appendix N1).

The questions were divided into three distinct blocks: the first block served to identify respondents and their qualifications; the second block was aiming to understand how the HEIs perceive integration of micro-credentials into the higher education. The third block addressed the vision of the higher education system toward micro-credentials delivery models aiming to explore their connection with optimal models.

**The questionnaire for potential implementers of micro-credentials was available from May 22nd to June 22nd, 2024.**

### 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 micro-credentials in Armenia, including higher education institutions, associations, and non-formal education providers. The Georgian side of the project also considered it reasonable to send the mentioned questionnaire to the above-mentioned institutions.

A questionnaire designated by the Armenian partners of the Micro-GEAR project was sent to project participants, relevant stakeholders 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 Armenian and Georgian sides of the project for the aforementioned stakeholders.

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

- A total of 50 different institutions in Armenia (50 in total);**
- ✓ **State higher educational institution - 13**
- ✓ **Branches of licensed foreign state and non-state higher educational institutions operating in RA - 6**
- ✓ **RA non-state higher educational institutions – 7**
- ✓ **Scientific institutions – 22**
- ✓ **Other organisations - 2**

Sending the questionnaire to all higher education institutions was conditioned by the fact that, according to the results of the survey conducted by the ANQA in 2022, regarding the existing practice of micro-credentials system in the field of higher education, also aimed to establish a connection with the practice of micro-credentials 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 analyse the results of the surveys conducted in 2022-2024.

The selected non-formal education provider organizations operating based on higher education institutions focused more on practical aspects and implemented courses that were more relevant to the sphere of work and ongoing professional development.

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 labour 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 the Armenian higher education system, certification exams issued by the centres recognized internationally are required for achieving higher education goals. Also, it is noteworthy to mention that in the higher education system of Armenia, there is a rich experience of recognizing language proficiency certificates issued by internationally recognized language centres for 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.

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## II. Survey results

The survey consisted of an electronic questionnaire (Appendix 1) which was distributed to accredited higher education institutions, training centres, and professional associations in Armenia. Response in the survey was obtained from 50 respondents, including 13 State higher educational institutions, 6 Branches of licensed foreign state and non-state higher educational institutions operating in RA, 7 RA non-state (private) higher educational institutions, 22 Scientific institutions, 2 other organisations.

Several questions were formulated differently but both research works displayed more or less the same tendency.

The following educational institutions participated in the 2024 survey

### **State Universities:**

1. Yerevan State University
2. Yerevan State Medical University after Mkhitar Heratsi
3. State Engineering University of Armenia
4. Yerevan State Linguistic University after Valeri Brusov
5. Yerevan State University of Economy
6. International scientific educational centre of National Academy of Sciences of RA
7. State Academy of Fine Arts of Armenia
8. Yerevan State Conservatory after Komitas
9. Armenian State Institute of Physical Culture and Sport
10. National University of Architecture and Construction of Armenia
11. Armenian National Agrarian University
12. State Academy of Crisis Management
13. Public Administration Academy of the Armenia

### **Foreign Universities and Armenian branches of state universities of the foreign countries:**

1. American University of Armenia
2. European Regional Educational Academy
3. Plekhanov Russian University of Economics

4. Branch of Lomonosov Moscow State University in Yerevan
5. West Ukrainian National University Yerevan Education and Research Institute
6. Russian-Armenian University

#### **Private Institutes and Universities of Armenia**

1. Eurasia International University
2. Armenian Medical Institute
3. University of International Relations
4. International Accountancy Training Centre (IATC)
5. Gladzor University
6. Erebuni medicalm
7. University of Traditional Medicine

#### **Scientific organizations:**

1. Centre for Ecological-Noosphere Studies of National Academy of Sciences of RA
2. Institute of Mathematics of NAS of RA
3. Institute of Mechanics of NAS of RA
4. Institute for Informatics and Automation Problems of NAS of RA
5. Byurakan Astrophysical Observatory after V. Ambartsumian of NAS of RA
6. Institute of Radiophysics and Electronics of NAS of RA
7. Institute of Applied Problems of Physics of NAS of RA
8. Institute for Physical Research of NAS of RA
9. Institute of Biochemistry after H. Buniatyan of NAS of RA
10. Institute of Botany after A.L. Takhtajyan of NAS of RA
11. Scientific and Production Centre of NAS of RA
12. Institute of Molecular Biology of NAS of RA
13. Institute of Physiology after L.A. Orbeli of NAS of RA

14. Scientific Centre of Zoology and Hydroecology of NAS of RA
15. Scientific Technological Centre of Organic and Pharmaceutical Chemistry of NAS of RA
16. Institute of Chemical Physics after A. B. Nalbandyan of NAS of RA
17. Institute of Geological Sciences of NAS of RA
18. Institute of Geophysics and Engineering Seismology after A. Nazarov of NAS of RA
19. Centre for the Advancement of Natural Discoveries using Light Emission, CANDEL
20. Mesrop Mashtots Matenadaran
21. A. I. Alikhanyan National Science Laboratory (Yerevan Institute of Physics, AANL)
22. Yerevan Computer Research Development Institute

**Other providers:**

1. Armenian Code Academy
2. International School of leadership and Professional development

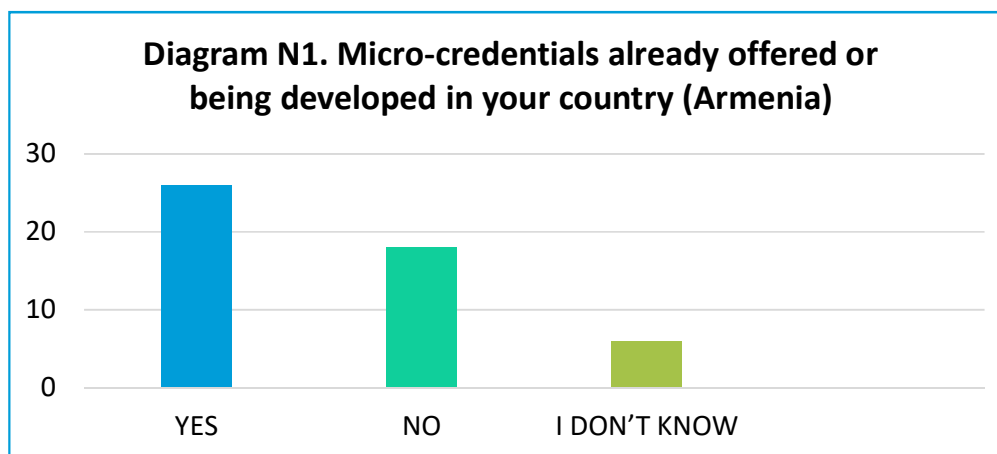
**As a result of analysing the answers to the questionnaire the following tendencies were revealed:  
The most acceptable definition of micro-credentials is the following:**

- a. 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 are an effective tool for improving 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.
- b. A micro-credential is a certification that focuses on a specific set of learning outcomes in a narrow field of learning and is completed over a shorter period.
- c. Institutions have a unique opportunity to meet evolving student needs with flexible, job-relevant skills by offering academic credit for micro-credentials.
- d. In addition to strengthening students' long-term career outcomes, like job stability and higher earning potential, micro-credentials also help alumni, faculty, and others further their careers.
- e. Integrating industry micro-credentials into existing curricula can be a significant challenge, especially for institutions that haven't yet embraced this approach to learning.
- f. Barriers to integration for institutions that do offer micro-credentials Even institutions that have already embraced micro-credentials may face challenges with seamless integration. To address some of these concerns, institutions must create a clear framework for aligning micro-credentials with existing

curricula. Engaging faculty in the process of identifying, pursuing, and integrating micro-credentials-as well as providing them with the resources and support to do so can help secure their buy-in and ensure successful programme implementation.

g. To successfully launch and scale a programme leading to micro-credentials, it's critical to first establish the business case. This may involve allocating resources to support programme development and implementation, investing in professional development opportunities for faculty, and forming partnerships with industry leaders to ensure the relevance and quality of the micro-credentials.

**Question N1. To your knowledge, are micro-credentials already offered or being developed in your country?**

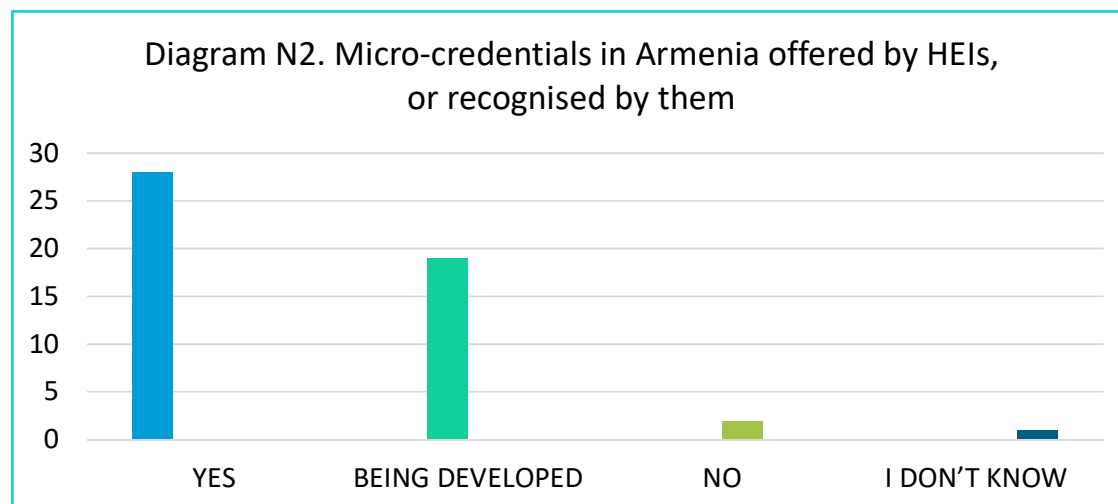


A1. The majority of the respondents answered "Yes", because everyone is well aware of micro-qualifications in the Republic of Armenia, as changes are taking place based on the new draft law of the RA "Higher Education and Science" and "On Approving the State Development Plan of Education until 2030".

Based on the draft of the RA "Higher Education and Science" new law, micro-credentials are a non-qualifying (informal) and non-qualifying (non-formal) way of certifying the acquisition of certain professional skills or abilities as a result of training in an educational programme, which is established by a verifiable document provided by the organization implementing the programme, and which can be a basis for employment.

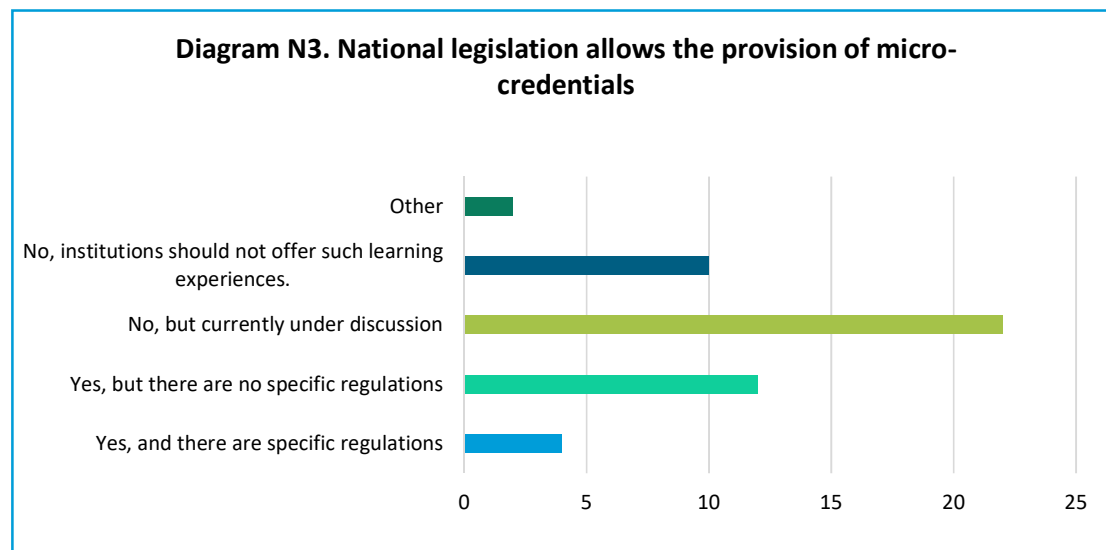
The Law of the Republic of Armenia "On Approving the State Development Plan of Education until 2030" provides for the improvement of educational standards and programmes, in particular, the implementation of the process of self-certification of the national framework of qualifications, the possibility of providing informal qualifications, including micro-credentials, as continuing education components.

**Question N2. Do you have examples of micro-credentials in your country offered by HEIs, or recognised by them?**



A2. The majority of respondents consider that micro-qualifications are provided in Armenia and there are relevant educational programmes, but the process of their recognition and improvement in accordance with EU standards is in the development stage.

**Question N3. Does your national legislation allow for the provision of micro-credentials?**

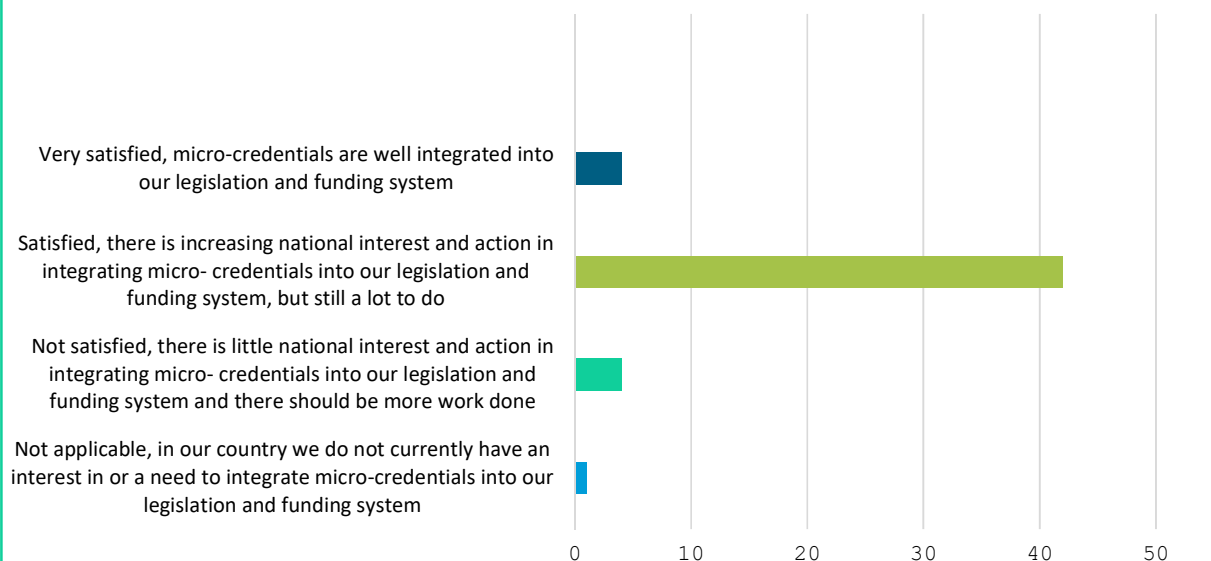


A3. As it was mentioned before the changes being made above, in the future all these changes will lead to a new policy and legislative regulation regarding micro-credentials.

**Question N4. How satisfied are you with the current uptake and acceptance of micro-credentials in your legislation?**



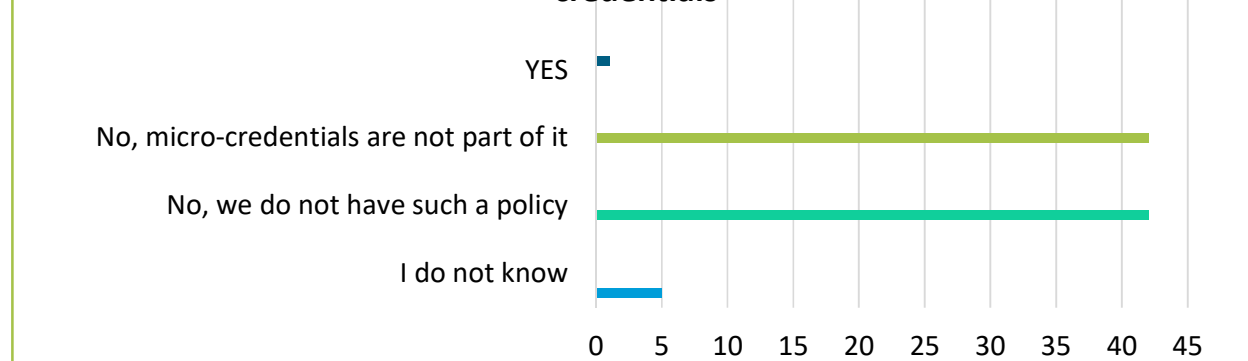
**Diagram N4. The current uptake and acceptance of micro-credentials in AM legislation**



A4. The majority of respondents are satisfied, there is increasing national interest and action in integrating micro-credentials into our legislation and funding system, but still there is a lot to do.

**Question N5. If you have a national policy on the digitalisation of credentials, are micro-credentials part of it?**

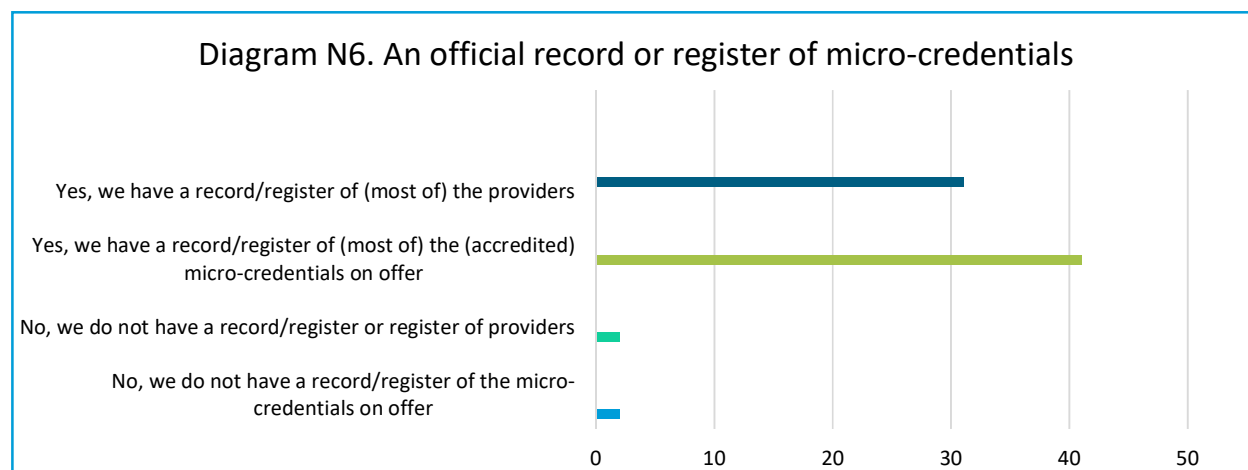
**Diagram N5. The a national policy on the digitalisation of credentials**



A5. As a result of the implemented educational reforms, primary and high school graduation documents are already issued in electronic version (Source: <https://escs.am/am/news/13184>). Respondents claim

that in the future all types of certifications and diplomas will be issued digitally, providing online and hybrid educational programmes as well.

**Question N6. Do you have an official record or register of micro-credentials and providers in your country? (multiple answers possible)**

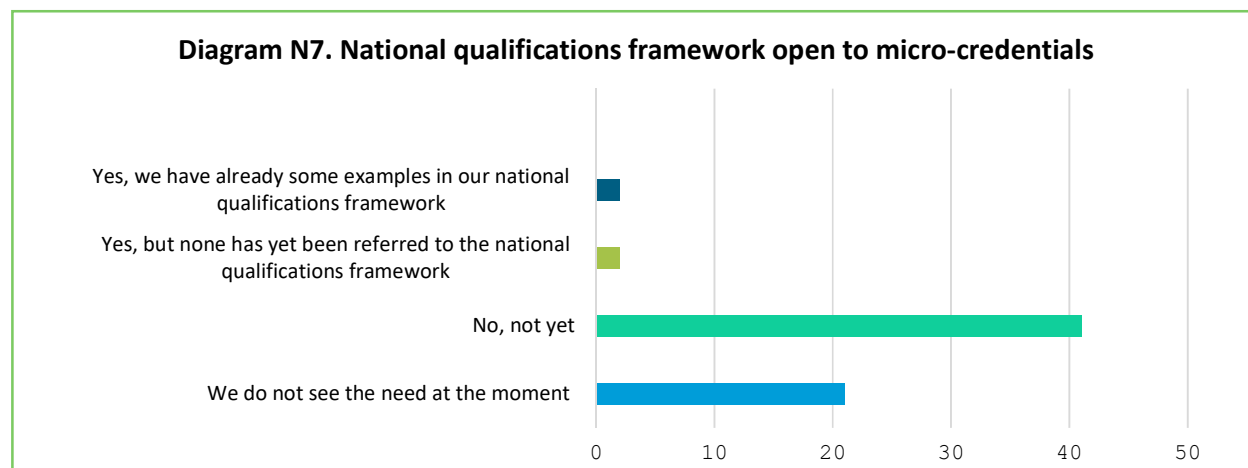


A6. The majority replied that there is a record/register of (most of) the providers, or have a record/register of (most of) the (accredited) micro-credentials on offer. However, it doesn't function. It needs to be updated.

## QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK & ECTS

In this section, we collect information about the qualifications framework and ECTS in Armenia.

**Question N7. Is your national qualifications framework open to micro-credentials?**



A7. According to the majority view of the respondents, there should exist a unified database/registry in the country regarding the available micro-credentials. They consider that such a unified database/registry should contain information such as: name of the micro-credential, the providers'

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

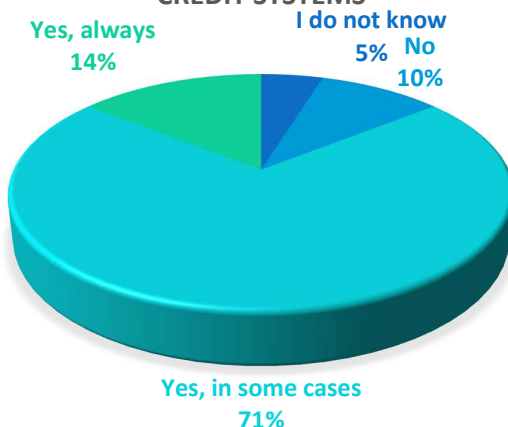
Inclusion of micro-credentials in a unified database/registry enables easier access to information about the programmes' contents, evaluation methods used, as well as information about other determinations/providers/employers regarding recognition and the processes of quality assurance for micro-credentials. 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 programme with a high percentage of relevance.

In the case of legislative approval for the implementation of micro-credentials in the higher education sector, the following fields have been identified as the most appropriate for the implementation of micro-credentials:

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

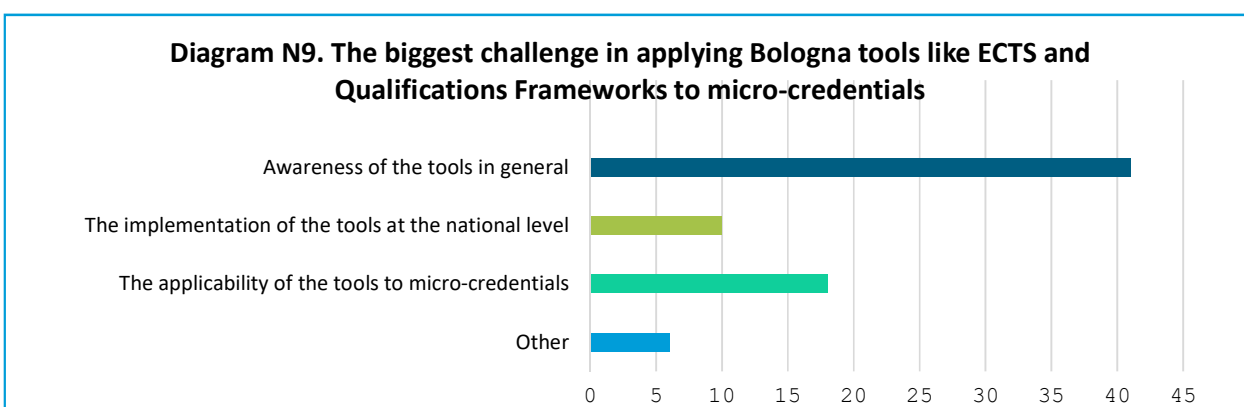
**Question N8. Are micro-credentials expressed in ECTS or other credit systems (with reference to learning outcomes and workload)?**

**DIAGRAM N8. MICRO-CREDENTIALS EXPRESSED IN ECTS OR OTHER CREDIT SYSTEMS**



A8. The data shows that the majority of respondents support the expression of micro-credentials volume in terms of 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 programmes leading to micro-credentials in ECTS credits has been determined as the most optimal model by the majority of respondents. In response to the question of what mechanism should exist for the implementation of programmes leading to micro-credentials, the majority of respondents indicated that there should be an internal and external quality assurance mechanism for micro-credentials.

**Question N9. What do you think is the biggest challenge in applying Bologna tools like ECTS and Qualifications Frameworks, to micro-credentials?**



A9. The survey results reveal that the main challenge in implementing programmes leading to micro-credentials 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-credentials.

**Question N10. Do you have any other comments regarding these tools in relation to micro-credentials (e.g. design, use)?**

A10. In the RA there is no reference to micro-credentials in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). In most cases, this is due to the fact that micro-credentials are perceived as a new topic that requires further discussion at the national level. Nonetheless, there are micro-credentials expressed in ECTS, either in some cases or always. The number of assigned/estimated ECTS varies across and the range in number of ECTS credits varies from 1 to more than 100.

Even if the discussion on qualifications framework and ECTS is still ongoing, there is consensus on the fact that, if micro-credentials are referred to the NQF, this supports transparency and recognition.

Among the issues raised by the data on QF and ECTS, there is the fact that the term micro-credentials refer both to the learning experience and to the qualification awarded. A micro-credential certificate or “supplement” should include all the elements needed to better describe the micro-credential awarded. Qualifications that are explicitly foreseen in the NQF generally have substantive sizes. Micro-credentials, when they are very small, may not be listed in the NQF, but they would nevertheless gain transparency and relevance for personal and professional development if they were assigned to the QF by their respective providers.

Referring to the very varied landscape concerning the number of ECTS assigned to micro-credentials, data shows that micro-credentials are not or not always expressed in ECTS although this is perfectly possible, as explained in the Lifelong Learning (LLL) section of the ECTS Users’ Guide - using the same principles for credit allocation, award, accumulation, and transfer accumulation as is done for component parts of programmes. Such coherent use of a key Bologna tool would greatly benefit learners, Higher Education institutions (HEIs), and employers alike.

Obviously, ECTS for micro-credentials would have to be used correctly and express both the volume of work needed and the learning outcomes, capturing the effort that is needed and the learning outcomes achieved.

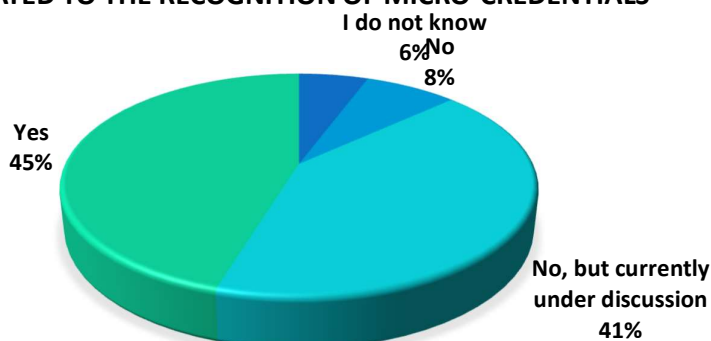
In addition, a well-defined policy is crucial for institutions to fully harness the potential of micro-credentials. Without a clear framework, campuses may lack the infrastructure and processes to effectively offer these valuable learning opportunities, hindering adoption and limiting student access. By developing a strong policy, institutions can pave the way for smooth integration and maximize the benefits of micro-credentials for both students and themselves.

## **RECOGNITION**

**In this section, we collect information about the recognition processes in Armenia.**

**Question N11. Have you implemented policies and/or practices related to the recognition of micro-credentials?**

**DIAGRAM N11. IMPLEMENTED POLICIES AND/OR PRACTICES  
RELATED TO THE RECOGNITION OF MICRO-CREDENTIALS**



A11. Most respondents answered that there is or start a process being discussed according to which elements are considered relevant in the recognition process:

- ✓ quality of the study programme
- ✓ verification of the certificate
- ✓ level of the study programme
- ✓ learning outcomes
- ✓ workload
- ✓ assessment procedures
- ✓ identification of the participant
- ✓ other

**Question N12. For what purpose do you recognise micro-credentials in your country? (multiple answers possible)**

A12. The majority of respondents supported the following definition of micro-credentials: Micro-credentials, also known as small-credit programmes, 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 labour 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 labour market:

- ✓ To provide easier access to higher education - 42
- ✓ To recognise credits or prior learning - 48
- ✓ To increase learners' competitiveness in the labour market - 31
- ✓ For academic purposes/ further studies - 33
- ✓ To allow registered students to earn credits towards a higher education qualification -21
- ✓ We do not (yet) recognise micro-credentials in my country -44
- ✓ Other - 0

**Question N13. Does your legislation allow higher education institutions to recognise micro-credentials when offered by providers that are not higher education institutions (companies, NGOs, international organisations, etc.)?**

A13. Based on the draft of the RA "Higher Education and Science" new law, micro-credentials are a non-qualifying (informal) and non-qualifying (non-formal) way of certifying the acquisition of certain professional skills or abilities as a result of training in an educational programme, which is established by a verifiable document provided by the organization implementing the programme, and which can be a basis for employment.

The Law of the Republic of Armenia "On Approving the State Development Plan of Education until 2030" provides for the improvement of educational standards and programmes, in particular, the implementation of the process of self-certification of the national framework of qualifications, the possibility of providing informal qualifications, including micro-credentials, as continuing education component.

**Question N14. Does your national legislation allow higher education institutions to recognize micro-credentials as part of a normal degree programme? In other words, can learners accumulate them to build up to a degree within higher education, or are they 'stackable'?**

**'Stackability: Stackability means that micro-credentials can be accumulated and grouped over time, building into a larger, more recognisable credential (Kazin and Clerkin, 2018, p. 7).'**

A14. The "State Education Development Plan of the Republic of Armenia until 2030" defines priority areas for development of the national educational system, including the development of complimentary education and micro-credentials. To introduce micro-credentials, the 2030 State Education Programme defines the following goals.

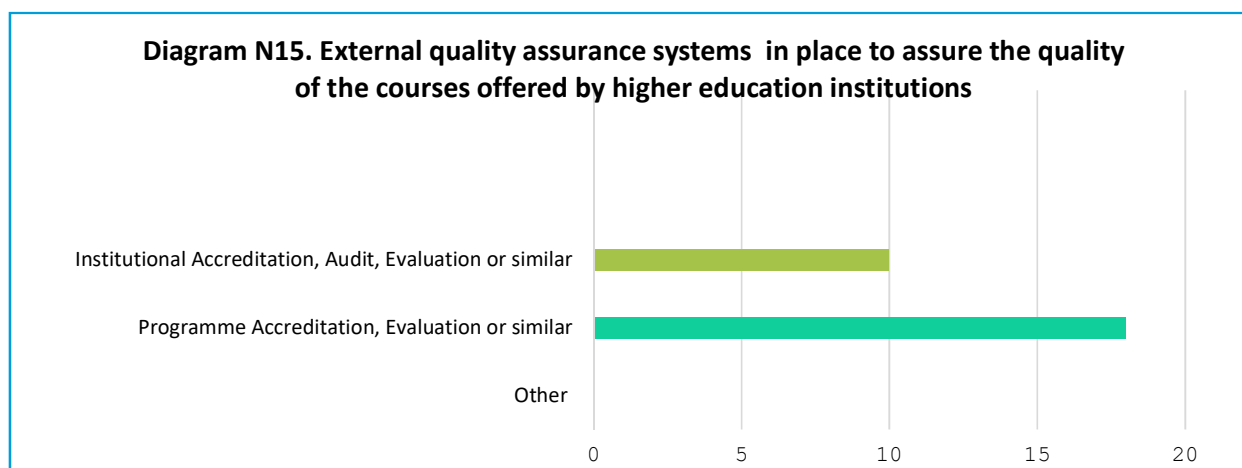
- 1.To increase the number of the modular programmes of professional education, training and complimentary short-term courses to improve and upgrade the capacities of employees for the priority economic area.
- 2.To develop a legal framework and methodology for training organizations offering non-formal complimentary educational courses by ensuring proper implementation of the stages, in particular needs assessment, guaranteeing the programme and monitoring of the process, recognition of achievements, certification, crediting, registration in a national register of trainings.
3. Evaluation, recognition, certification, crediting of the achievements of non-formal, informal learning, acquired skills and competences of an individual, registration in a national register.

4. Creation of a national register of training for complimentary educational programmes and courses, including information on training providers, names of assessed and certified learners, their achievements. Similar to the worldwide tendencies, the rapidly developing economy and the labour market of Armenia requires continuous self-education by acquiring up-to-date knowledge. In this regard, the 2030 State Education Programme also defines a precise action, namely: "It is planned to introduce a system of an evaluation, recognition, and certification of non-formal and informal learning results, to strengthen the processes of organization and implementation of additional educational programmes".

## QUALITY ASSURANCE

In this section, we collect information on the quality assurance systems in Armenia.

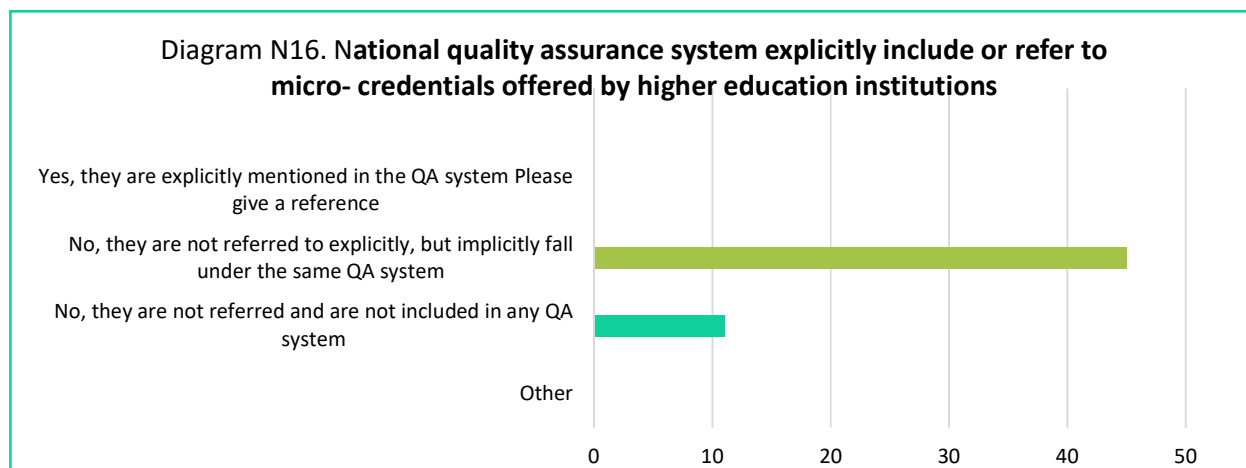
**Question N15. What external quality assurance systems do you have in place to assure quality of the courses offered by higher education institutions?**



A15. All Armenian universities have passed institutional accreditation for 2-6 years. Several universities are actively working on programme accreditation. Micro-credentials have been applied for only one educational programme at the moment to ANQA, but due to a legislative gap, it will be considered as a formal educational programme.

**Question N16. Does your national quality assurance system explicitly include or refer to micro-credentials offered by higher education institutions?**





**Question N17. Have you implemented any other policies and/or practices related to the quality assurance of micro-credentials?**

A17. As for QA, in general terms, the majority of Armenia monitor the quality of courses through both programme accreditation/evaluation and institutional evaluation or monitoring, while in a lower number of cases it is monitored either through programme accreditation/evaluation or institutional evaluation. When talking about the inclusion of micro-credentials in the national QA systems, the fact that they are not explicitly mentioned, it does not prevent most universities from considering them implicitly covered by their QA system. A point that seems to come to light is that ad hoc external quality procedures (such as programme accreditation) are considered too burdensome to be applied to micro-credentials.

Analysing the sources of information on the QA status of the credentials awarded, in most cases information is provided by the awarding institution itself.

**Question N18. How can one get information on the QA status of the awarded credential (the award achieved at the end of the course)?**

A18. The majority of respondents answered:

- ✓ Through the provider (higher education institution) -47
- ✓ Through a National accreditation register or list of accredited micro-credentials - 8
- ✓ From a dedicated portal - 1
- ✓ Other - 2
- ✓ It is not possible - 0
- ✓ I do not know - 1

## GENERAL

In this section, shared last examples and further thoughts and comments with us.

**Question N19.** Do you have examples of good practice in relation to any of the areas in the questionnaire (legislation, recognition, QA, QF & ECTS, etc.) that you would like to share? If yes, can you please specify and provide a link to the relevant information and documentation if available.

A19. The majority of respondents suggested getting to know:

1. Digital Badges and Micro-credentials: Historical Overview, Motivational Aspects, Issues, and Challenges (Ellis, Nunn, and Avella, 2016)
2. Postsecondary Certificates and Degrees Conferred (National Center for Education Statistics, 2024)
3. Degrees and Other Formal Awards Conferred (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019)
4. Towards a common definition of micro-credentials (UNESDOC, 2022)
5. Future of Jobs Report 2023 (World Economic Forum, 2023)
6. 2024 Work Trend Index Annual Report (Microsoft and LinkedIn, 2024)
7. Global Skills Report 2024 (Coursera, 2024)
8. Advancing Higher Education with Industry Micro-Credentials (Coursera, 2023)
9. Global Skills Report 2024 (Coursera, 2024)
10. Occupational Outlook Handbook (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024)
11. Advancing Higher Education with Industry Micro-Credentials (Coursera, 2023)
12. Examining Higher Ed's Digital Future (Cengage, 2023)
13. Learner Outcomes Report (Coursera, 2023)
14. Transforming Higher Education through For-Credit Online Learning (Coursera, 2023)
15. Disengaged Learners & Return Paths to Higher Education (UPCEA and StraighterLine, 2023)
16. Disengaged Learners & Return Paths to Higher Education (UPCEA and StraighterLine, 2023)
17. GenAI in Higher Education (Tyton Partners, 2023)
19. 2024 Work Trend Index Annual Report (Microsoft & LinkedIn, May 2024).

**Question N20.** How would you characterise your overall feeling towards micro-credentials?

A20. Respondents answered (Total 50 institutions):

- a. Micro-credentials are a way to make higher education more flexible and inclusive in the future -47
- b. Micro-credentials are here to stay, but they have to be regulated and integrated properly -41
- c. Micro-credentials are a short-term trend - 6
- d. Micro-credentials do not have a place in higher education institutions and should not be included in related legislation - 2
- e. I have no feelings towards micro-credentials -0

### **III. Findings of the Report Based on the Survey Results Related to the Implementation of programmes leading to micro-credentials:**

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

The majority of respondents supported the following definition of micro-credentials: Micro-credentials, also known as small-credit programmes, 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 labour 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 labour market.

#### **a. Authorized institutions for the implementation of programmes leading to micro-credentials**

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

#### **b. ECTS credit priorities**

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

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

The majority of respondents believe that programmes leading to micro-credentials 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.

#### **d. Authorized body for recognition of micro-credentials**

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

#### **e. Main challenges**

The data shows that the main challenge in implementing programmes leading to micro-credentials 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.

#### **f. 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.

#### **g. 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 programmes leading to micro-credentials.

The survey results indicate a great potential for the implementation of programmes leading to micro-credentials, if appropriate legal foundations will be established by Armenian legislation for the implementation of such programmes 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 programmes leading to micro-credentials will be flexible and standardized to facilitate their broad recognition and use.

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## References

Council of the European Union. (2022, May 25). Proposal for a Council Recommendation on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability - Adoption. Retrieved October 19, 2023, from europa.eu: <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9237-2022-INIT/en/pdf>

European project MICROBOL. (2022, March 22). News & Events. Retrieved September 11, 2023, from MICROBOL: [https://microbol.knowledgeinnovation.eu/wpcontent/uploads/sites/20/2022/03/Micro-credentials\\_Framework\\_final-1.pdf](https://microbol.knowledgeinnovation.eu/wpcontent/uploads/sites/20/2022/03/Micro-credentials_Framework_final-1.pdf)

## Appendix 1

### **Questionnaire on the current practices of micro-credentials systems at higher education sector in Armenia, aimed at studying the viewpoints of potential implementers**

All questions marked with an ‘\*’ are mandatory.

#### **\* CONTACT INFORMATION**

In this section, we aim to collect information about the contact person for this survey.

- ✓ Please indicate the name of the contact person for this survey at your Ministry/HEI/Organisation/ Association.
- ✓ Please indicate the email address of the contact person for this survey.
- ✓ Please indicate the main function of the contact person for this survey.
- ✓ Please indicate the name of your Ministry/HEI/Organisation/Association.
- ✓ Please select the country of your Ministry/HEI/Organisation/ Association.

#### **GENERAL**

In this section, we want to collect some general information about micro-credentials in your country.

#### **\*1. To your knowledge, are micro-credentials already offered or being developed in your country?**

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I do not know

#### **\*2. Do you have examples of micro-credentials in your country offered by HEIs, or recognised by them?**

- a. Yes

Please provide further details on the micro-credentials you have in your country. Please provide links to relevant information and documentation, if available.

- b. Being developed

Please provide further details on the micro-credentials being developed in your country. Please provide links to relevant information and documentation, if available.

- c. No

- d. I do not know

#### **\* 3. Does your national legislation allow for the provision of micro-credentials ?**

- a. Yes, and there are specific regulations

Could you please provide more detail and/or a copy or link to the relevant norms or legislation? (and an English

translation, if possible)

In order to further develop such learning experiences or micro-credentials, would you like to receive additional support (e.g. peer support, exchange of practices with experts from other countries, webinars, etc.)?

b. Yes, but there are no specific regulations

Could you please provide more detail and/or a copy or link to the relevant norms or legislation? (and an English translation, if possible)

In order to further develop such learning experiences or micro-credentials, would you like to have additional support (e.g. peer support, exchange of practices with experts from other countries, webinars, etc.)?

c. No, but currently under discussion

Why is the legislation being discussed now? What key issues are being discussed?

Would you need further support to revise your legislation (e.g. peer support, exchange of practices with experts from other countries, webinars, etc.)?

d. No, institutions should not offer such learning experiences.

What revisions to your legislation would be necessary to make provision of micro-credentials possible?

Would you need further support to revise your legislation (e.g. peer support, exchange of practices with experts from other countries, webinars, etc.)?

e. Other (please specify).

**\*4. How satisfied are you with the current uptake and acceptance of micro-credentials in your legislation?**

a. Very satisfied, micro-credentials are well integrated into our legislation and funding system

b. Satisfied, there is increasing national interest and action in integrating micro-credentials into our legislation and funding system, but still a lot to do

c. Not satisfied, there is little national interest and action in integrating micro-credentials into our legislation and funding system and there should be more work done

d. Not applicable, in our country we do not currently have an interest in or a need to integrate micro-credentials into our legislation and funding system

**\*5. If you have a national policy on the digitalisation of credentials, are micro-credentials part of it?**

a. Yes

b. No, micro-credentials are not part of it

c. No, we do not have such a policy

d. I do not know

**\*6. Do you have an official record or register of micro-credentials and providers in your country? (multiple answers possible)**

- ☐ Yes, we have a record/register of (most of) the providers
- ☐ Yes, we have a record/register of (most of) the (accredited) micro-credentials on offer
- ☐ No, we do not have a record/register or register of providers
- ☐ No, we do not have a record/register of the micro-credentials on offer
- ☐ I do not know

**QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK & ECTS**

In this section, we want to collect information about the qualifications framework and ECTS in your country.

**\*7. Is your national qualifications framework open to micro-credentials?**

a. Yes, we have already some examples in our national qualifications framework. At which level(s) are they referred to/or can be referred to?

b. Yes, but none has yet been referred to the national qualifications framework. At which level(s) are they referred to/or can be referred to?

c. No, not yet

Could you elaborate on the reason for this?

d. We do not see the need at the moment. Could you elaborate on the reason for this?

e. I do not know

**\*8. Are micro-credentials expressed in ECTS or other credit systems (with reference to learning outcomes and workload)?**

a. Yes, always

What is the range or amount of ECTS/ other credit systems for micro-credentials?

b. Yes, in some cases

What is the range or amount of ECTS/ other credit systems for micro-credentials?

c. No

Why not?

d. I do not know

**\*9. What do you think is the biggest challenge in applying Bologna tools like ECTS and Qualifications Frameworks, to micro-credentials?**



- a. Awareness of the tools in general
- b. The implementation of the tools at the national level
- c. The applicability of the tools to micro-credentials
- d. Other possible challenges?

**10. Do you have any other comments regarding these tools in relation to micro-credentials (e.g. design, use)?**

### **RECOGNITION**

In this section, we want to collect information about the recognition processes in your country.

**\*11. Have you implemented policies and/or practices related to the recognition of micro-credentials?**

a. Yes

Please specify and provide a link to relevant information and documentation, if available.

Which elements are considered relevant in the recognition process? (multiple answers possible)

- ☐ quality of the study programme
- ☐ verification of the certificate
- ☐ level of the study programme
- ☐ learning outcomes
- ☐ workload
- ☐ assessment procedures
- ☐ identification of the participant
- ☐ other (please specify)

b. No, but currently under discussion

Would you like to have additional support (e.g. peer support, exchange of practices with experts from other countries, webinars, etc.) for the recognition of micro-credentials?

c. No

Would you like to have additional support (e.g. peer support, exchange of practices with experts from other countries, webinars, etc.) for the recognition of micro-credentials?

d. I do not know

**\*12. For what purpose do you recognise micro-credentials in your country? (multiple answers possible)**

- ☐ To provide easier access to higher education
- ☐ To recognise credits or prior learning
- ☐ To increase learners' competitiveness in the labour market

- ☐ For academic purposes/ further studies
- ☐ To allow registered students to earn credits towards a higher education qualification
- ☐ We do not (yet) recognise micro-credentials in my country
- ☐ Other (please specify)

**\*13. Does your legislation allow higher education institutions to recognise micro-credentials when offered by providers that are not higher education institutions (companies, NGOs, international organisations, etc.)?**

- a. Yes, micro-credentials from all higher education institutions and other providers are recognised
- b. No, only micro-credentials from higher education institutions are recognised, not from other providers  
Why are micro-credentials offered by other providers not recognised?

**\*14. Does your national legislation allow higher education institutions to recognize micro- credentials as part of a normal degree programme? In other words, can learners accumulate them to build up to a degree within higher education, or are they 'stackable'?**

'Stackability: Stackability means that micro-credentials can be accumulated and grouped over time, building into a larger, more recognisable credential (Kazin and Clerkin, 2018, p. 7).'

- a. Yes
- b. No Why not?

### **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

In this section, we want to collect information on the quality assurance systems in your country.

**\*15. What external quality assurance systems do you have in place to assure quality of the courses offered by higher education institutions?**

- ☐ Institutional Accreditation, Audit, Evaluation or similar
- ☐ Programme Accreditation, Evaluation or similar
- ☐ Other (please specify)

**\*16. Does your national quality assurance system explicitly include or refer to micro- credentials offered by higher education institutions?**

- a. Yes, they are explicitly mentioned in the QA system. Please give a reference.
- b. No, they are not referred to explicitly, but implicitly fall under the same QA system
- c. No, they are not referred and are not included in any QA system.  
How do you see it possible to integrate micro-credentials into your QA system?
- d. Other, please specify.

**\*17. Have you implemented any other policies and/or practices related to the quality assurance of micro-**

---

**credentials?**

a. Yes

Can you please specify and provide a link to relevant information and documentation, if available.

b. No

Would you like to have additional support (e.g. peer support, exchange of practices with experts from other countries, webinars, etc.) related to QA of micro-credentials?

c. I do not know

**\* 18. How can one get information on the QA status of the awarded credential (the award achieved at the end of the course)?**

- ☐ Through the provider (higher education institution)
- ☐ Through a register or list of accredited micro-credentials
- ☐ From a dedicated portal
- ☐ Other (please specify)
- ☐ It is not possible
- ☐ I do not know

**GENERAL**

In this section, please share your last examples and further thoughts and comments with us.

**19. Do you have examples of good practice in relation to any of the areas in the questionnaire (legislation, recognition, QA, QF & ECTS, etc.) that you would like to share? If yes, can you please specify and provide a link to the relevant information and documentation if available.**

**\*20. How would you characterise your overall feeling towards micro-credentials?**

- a. Micro-credentials are a way to make higher education more flexible and inclusive in the future
- b. Micro-credentials are here to stay, but they have to be regulated and integrated properly
- c. Micro-credentials are a short-term trend
- d. Micro-credentials do not have a place in higher education institutions and should not be included in related legislation
- e. I have no feelings towards micro-credentials

**21. Please share any further comments or thoughts.**

**“MICRO-GEAR MICRO-CREDENTIALS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION  
SYSTEMS OF GEORGIA AND ARMENIA:  
SOUTH CAUCASUS LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT”**

**Project #101127144**

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

**WP1; D1.1. Report on Regional micro-credentials Status-Quo study**

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**Tbilisi, 2024**

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# **“MICRO-GEAR MICRO-CREDENTIALS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEMS OF GEORGIA AND ARMENIA: SOUTH CAUCASUS LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT”**

**Project #101127144**

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*This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein*

## Acronyms

BICG – Bologna Process Implementation Group

ECTS – European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

ENQA – European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

MES – The Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia

MICRO-GEAR – "Micro-credentials for Higher Education systems of Georgia and Armenia: South Caucasus Lighthouse Project

NCEQE – LEPL National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement

NQF – National Qualifications Framework

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## 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 analysing the existing practices in Georgia regarding recognition, identification of challenges, and prospects for development. Additionally, it provides a comparative analysis based on the results of similar research conducted in 2021.

The potential of micro-credentials has been recognized by the Council of the European Union which, in May 2022, adopted the proposal for a Council Recommendation on 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).

The Council of the European Union 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 (2022).

In the thematic analysis document prepared by the LEPL National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement (NCEQE) 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).

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 programmes like micro-credentials, within the framework of non-formal education centres 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 instrument 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 labour 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 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 (NCEQE, 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 main higher 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 micro-credentials.

## II. Methodology

As the data collection method, 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 micro-credentials, focusing on higher education institutions, training centres, and accredited professional associations.

With the purpose of studying existing practices in the context of integrating micro-credentials 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 centres operating on their bases, and professional associations (for detailed information regarding the questionnaire, please refer to Appendix N1).

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## 2.2. Selection

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

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

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 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 NCEQE in 2021, regarding the existing practice of micro-credential system in the field of higher education, also aimed to establish a connection with the practice of micro-credentials 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 analyse 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 Defence 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 labour 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 centres 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 centres 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 micro-credentials into the higher education system. The final, third block addressed the vision of higher education system towards micro-credential delivery models aiming to explore their connection with optimal models.

The questionnaire for potential implementers of micro-credentials was available from May 2<sup>nd</sup> to May 18<sup>th</sup>, 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 analysed 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 centres, 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 research works displayed similar tendencies.

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

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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,

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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
  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 - Sulokhan-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

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## 27. Georgian Research and Educational Networking Association “GRENA”

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

- a. The most acceptable definition of micro-credentials 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 are 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 was already mentioned most of the respondents (18 out 27 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 programmes (with a small amount of credit) offered by accredited institutions, aimed at acquiring specific knowledge, skills, or competencies, and addressing societal, personal, cultural, or labour 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 programmes:** Both texts discuss small-scale educational activities aimed at acquiring specific knowledge, skills, and competencies. 2. **Labour market demands:** Both texts indicate that these programmes address labour market needs and assist employment market representatives. 3. **Recognition by educational institutions:** Both texts note that these programmes 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 labour market needs. 5. **Competency improvement on and off the job:** Both texts discuss that these programmes 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 programmes.

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 most respondents, best represents the essence and purpose of Micro-credentials.

- b. An institution authorized to implement micro-credentials may be a higher educational institution, a training centre, 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.

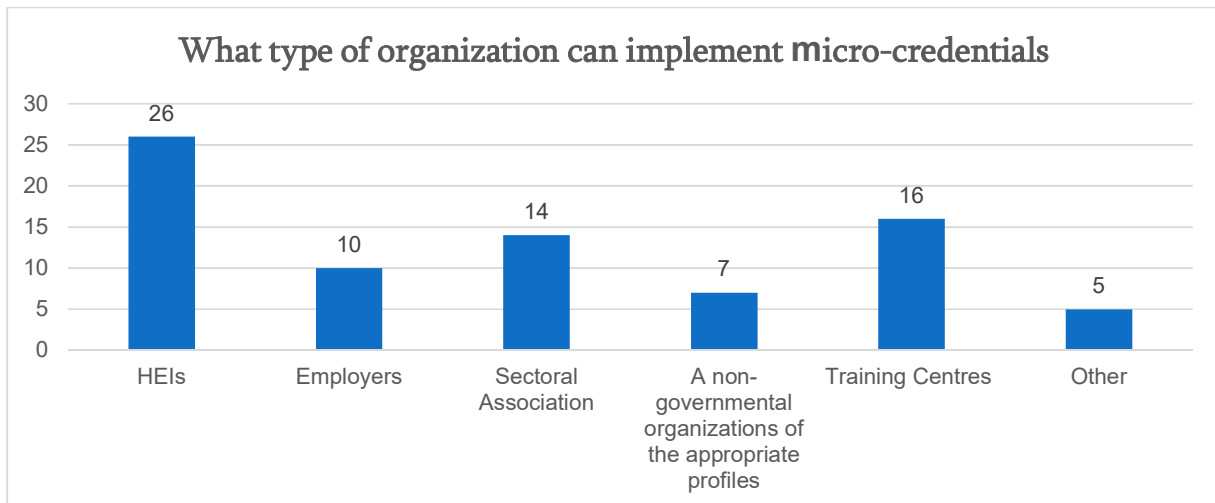
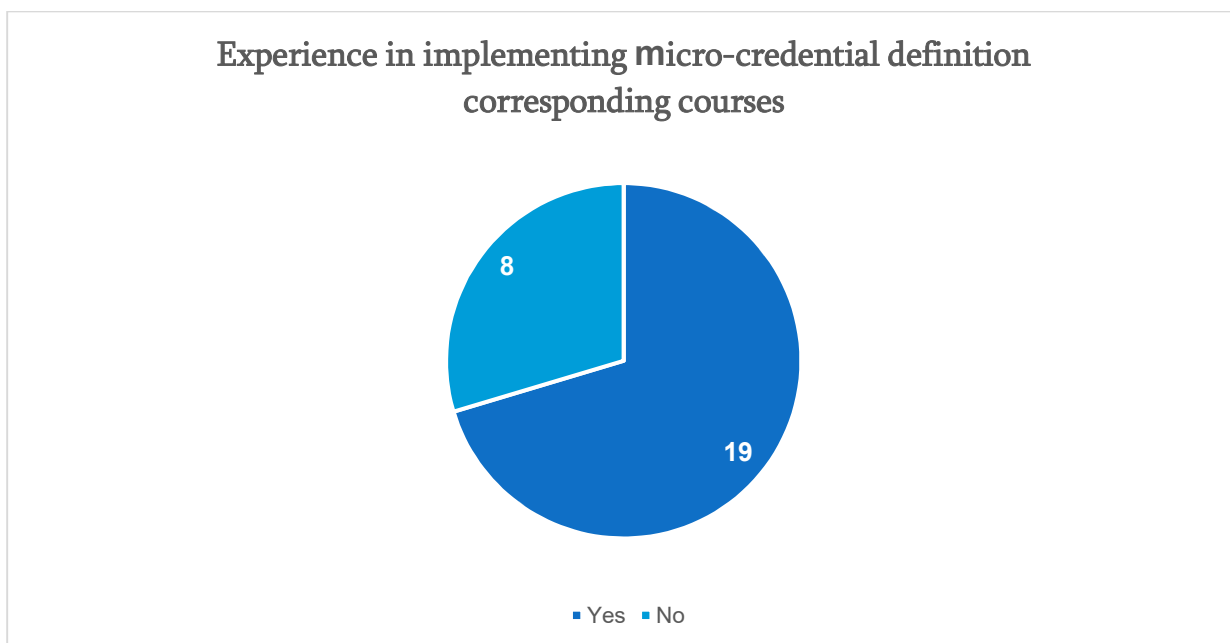


Diagram 1. What type of organization can implement Micro-credentials?



- c. 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 this type of experience.



*Diagram 2. Experience in implementing micro-credential definition corresponding courses in the surveyed higher education institutions*

- d. The majority of respondents (26 out of 27 surveyed) agree to implement courses leading to micro-credentials, 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:

### The main challenges for higher education institutions in implementing programmes leading to micro-credentials

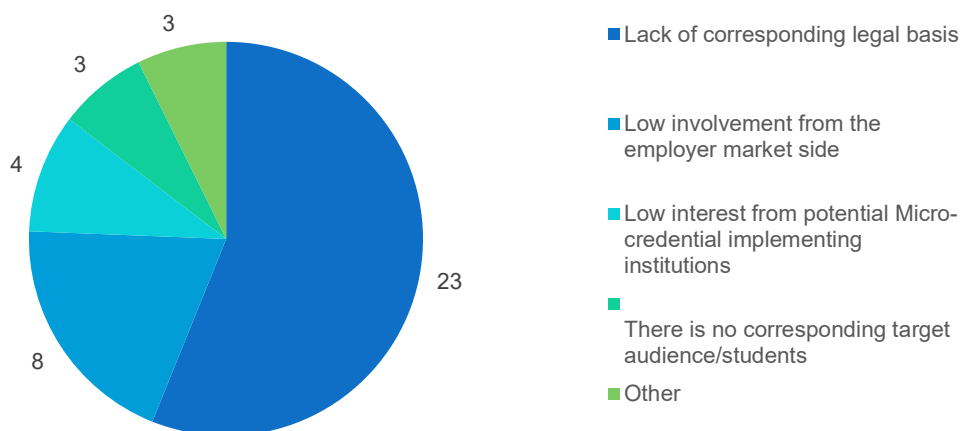


Diagram 3. The main challenges for higher education institutions in implementing programmes leading to micro-credentials

- 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:

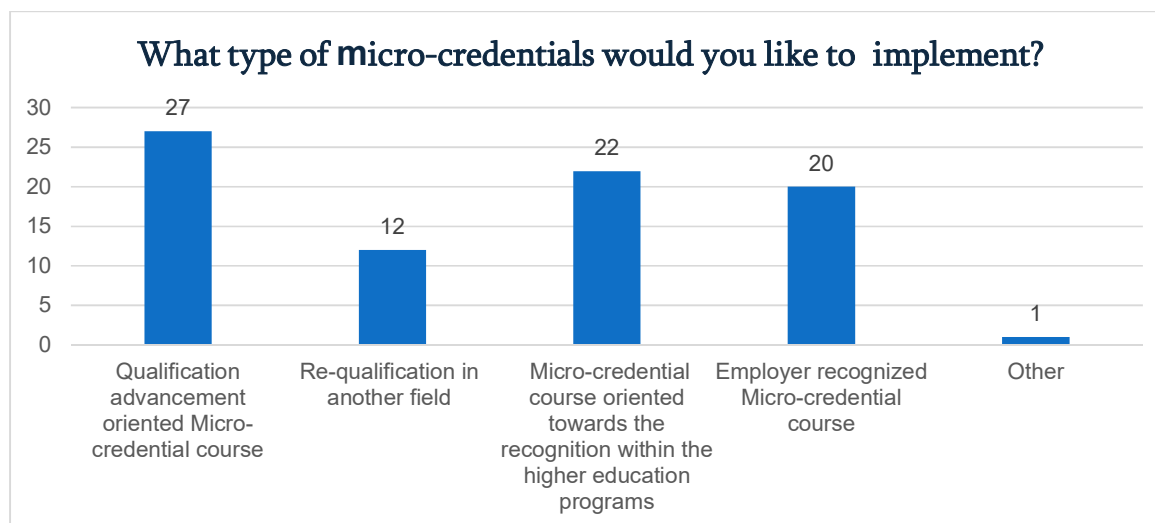


Diagram 4. Types of micro-credentials that higher education institutions would like to implement

- f. Regarding the target audience for Micro-credential programmes, 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:

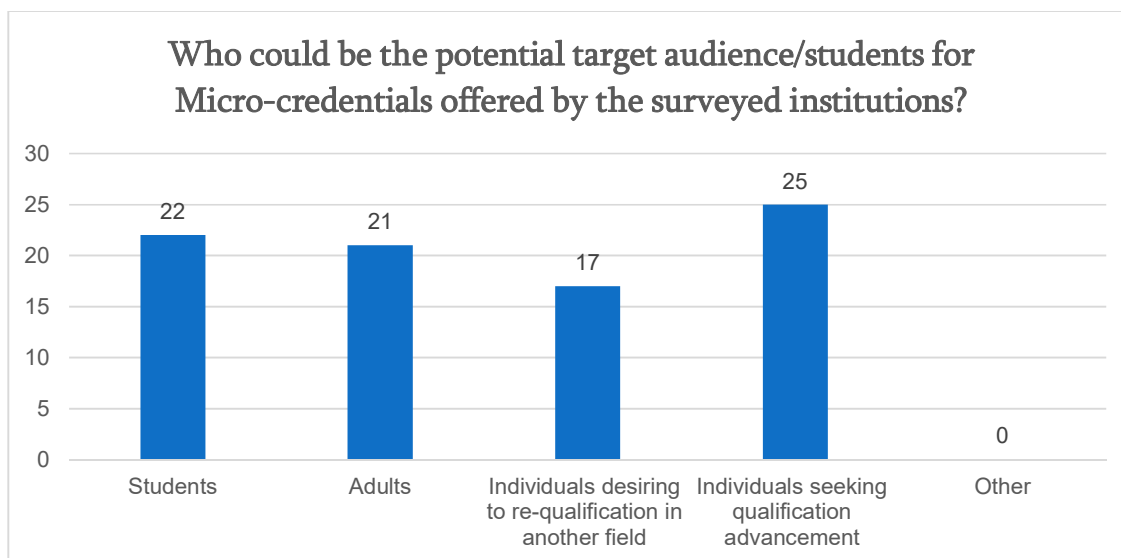


Diagram 5. Who could be the potential target audience/students for micro-credentials offered by the surveyed institutions?

- 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.

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

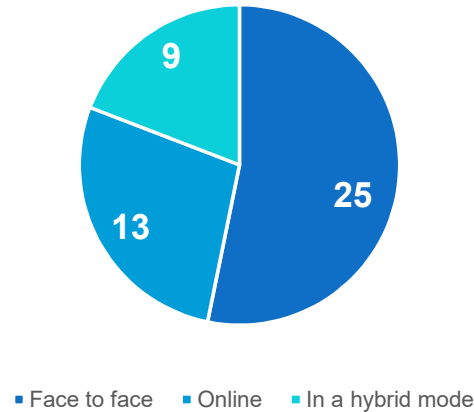


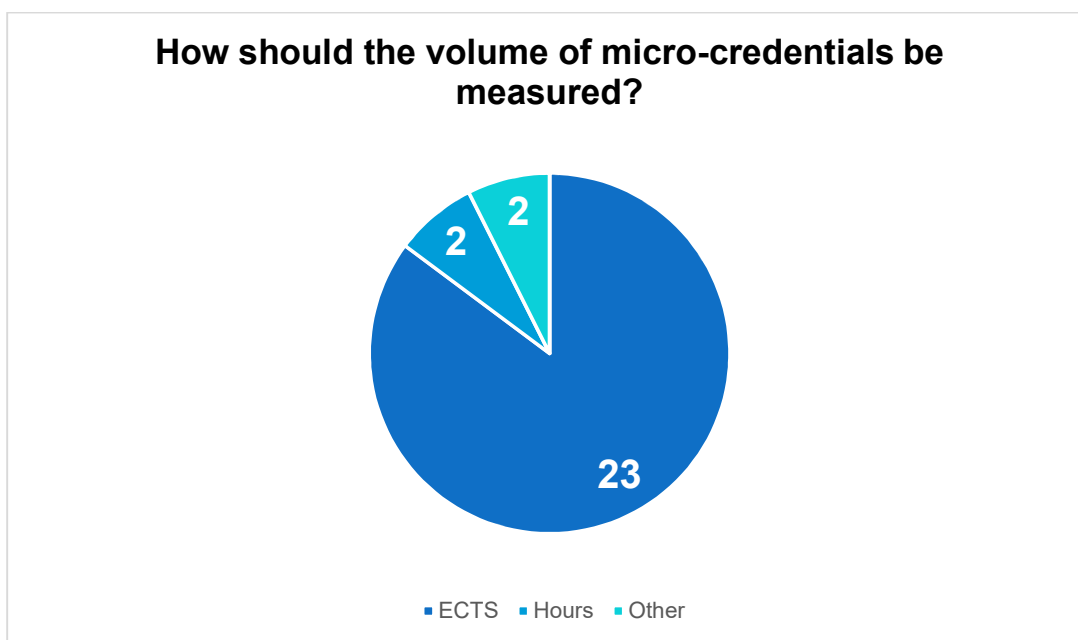
Diagram 6. The most optimal format for delivering micro-credentials

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 programme 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 supports 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 programmes leading to micro-credential in ECTS credits has been determined as the most optimal model by the majority of respondents.



*Diagram 7. Measuring the credit load of micro-credentials*

- i. In response to the question of what mechanism should exist for the implementation of programmes leading to micro-credential, most 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”.

### According to your institution's view, micro-credentials should be subject to:

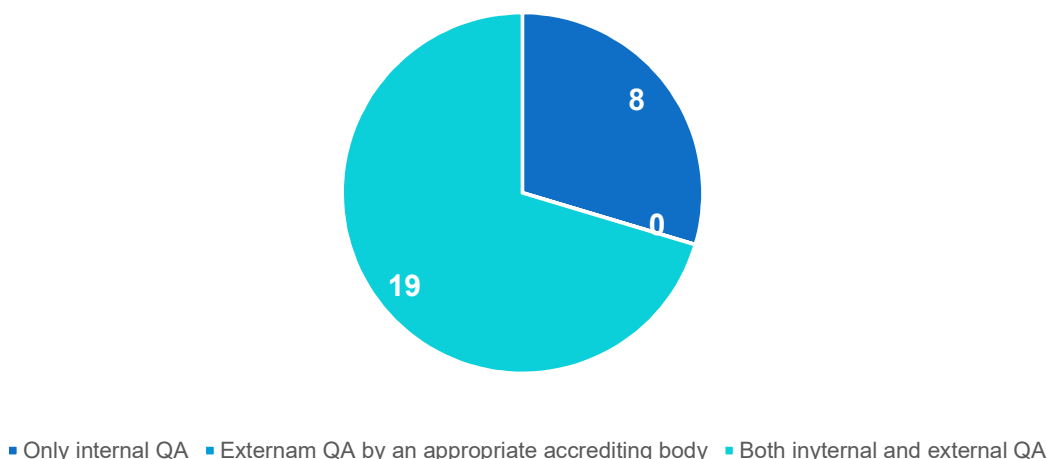


Diagram 8. Quality assurance of micro-credentials

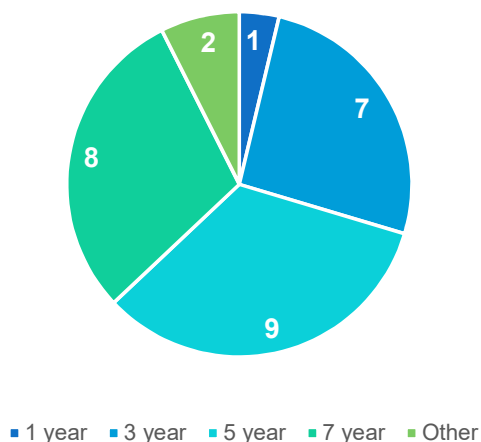
This data differs from the results of the 2021 survey, according to which 1 out of 27 respondents (4%) indicated that the quality assurance of small credit programmes should not take place, 14 respondents (52%) supported the external quality assurance mechanism, and 12 respondents (44%) indicated that the quality assurance of small credit programmes 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 programme leading to micro-credentials 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 programmes is understandable and practically implementable. Consequently, a similar model appears to be envisaged for Micro-credential programmes. Notably, in question 16, one respondent indicated that the most acceptable way for the institution to implement micro-credentials is that if an academic programme undergoes accreditation, a programme leading to micro-credential can be developed from the already accredited programme—meaning the programme can be divided into various micro-credentials programmes 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 programme leading to micro-credential?" 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 programmes leading to micro-credentials (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 programme 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.

**For how many years should it be possible to obtain permission to implement programmes leading to micro-credentials?**

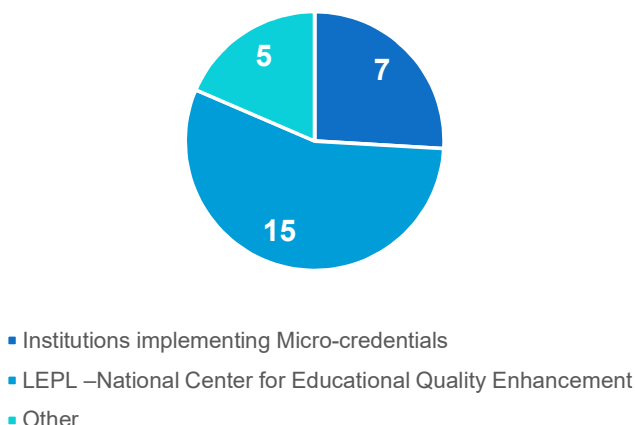


*Diagram 9. For how many years should it be possible to obtain permission to implement programmes leading to micro-credentials?*

1. According to the data, the NCEQE 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.



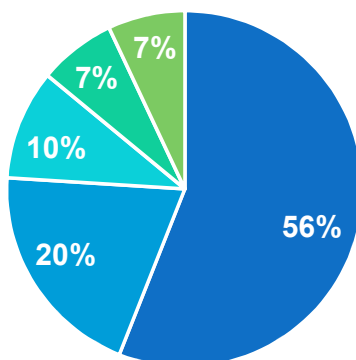
**In your Opinion which authority/agency/institution should be empowered to recognize micro-credentials, including those obtained abroad?**



*Diagram 10. Which authority/agency/institution should be empowered to recognize micro-credentials, including those obtained abroad?*

**m.** The survey results reveal that the main challenge in implementing micro-credential 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-credentials.

**Please indicate what are the main challenges for your institution for the implementation of micro-credentials?  
(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

*Diagram 11. The main challenges facing your institution for the implementation of micro-credentials*

- 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-credentials, 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-credentials 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-credentials, 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.

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

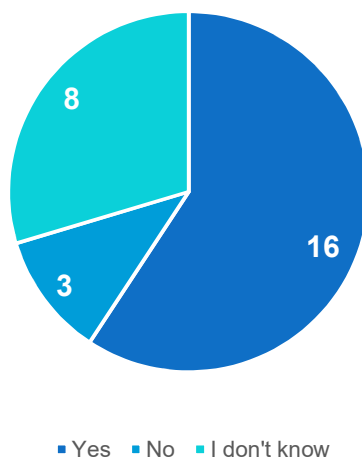


Diagram 12. Should it be possible to obtain more extensive qualification through the consolidation of micro-credentials?

- 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-credentials, 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-credentials in a unified database/registry enables easier access to information about the programmes' 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 programmes. 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 programme with a high percentage of relevance.

q. In the case of legislative approval for the implementation of micro-credentials 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 behavioural 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:**

Most 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 labour 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 labour 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 centres, 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 most 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 higher percentage of respondents support the inclusion of micro-credentials 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**

Most respondents believe that micro-credentials 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 programmes**

Most respondents prioritize programmes leading to micro-credentials 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.

#### **g. Main challenges**

The data shows that the main challenge in implementing micro-credential 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 supports 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 higher percentage of respondents support the existence of the unified database/registry for micro-credentials, which would improve the transparency and recognition of micro-credentials.

The survey results indicate a great potential for the implementation of micro-credentials if appropriate legal foundations will be established by Georgian legislation for the implementation of such programmes 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-credentials will be flexible and standardized to facilitate their broad recognition and use.

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## Appendix 1

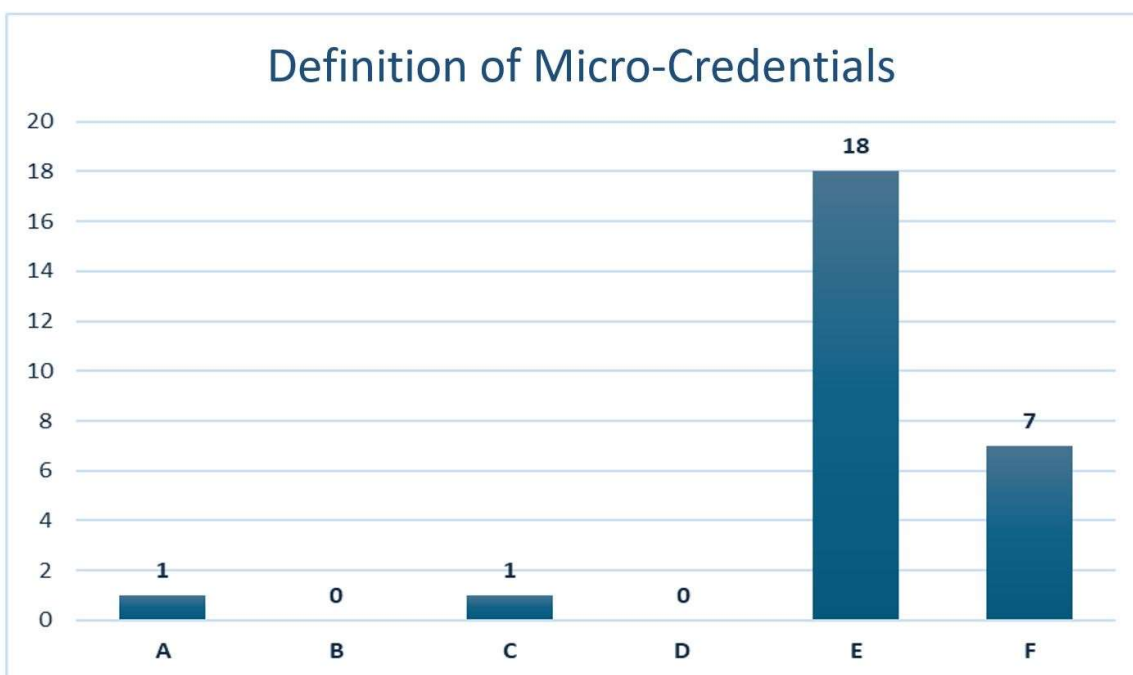
### **Questionnaire on the current practices of Micro-credential systems at higher education sector in Georgia, aimed at studying the viewpoints of potential implementers**

**1. Please select the most suitable definition of micro-credentials 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 are 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 are 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 centre

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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 your 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
  
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 for implementing Micro-credentials.**

**13. Please briefly describe the most suitable way for your organization to obtain the right to implement 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

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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 labour 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 a 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

**21. In case 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.**



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