Centralised Support to the Network of Higher Education Reform Experts (HERE)

HERE Seminar:

Towards the 2024 Tirana Ministerial Conference:
Implications and points of interest for higher education systems in Partner Countries neighbouring the EU

7-8 November 2023

Background information on: Micro-credentials

Centralised Support to the Network of Higher Education Reform Experts

What are micro-credentials? *Towards a common understanding*

- *A micro-credential is a small volume of learning certified by a credential. In the EHEA context, it can be offered by higher education institutions or recognised by them using recognition procedures in line with the Lisbon Recognition Convention or recognition of prior learning, where applicable. A micro-credential is designed to provide the learner with specific knowledge, skills or competences that respond to societal, personal, cultural or labour market needs. Micro-credentials have explicitly defined learning outcomes at a QF-EHEA/NQF level, an indication of associated workload in ECTS credits, assessment methods and criteria, and are subject to quality assurance in line with the ESG.*
- *Microbol project*

"Micro-credentials certify the learning outcomes of short-term learning experiences, for example a short course or training. They offer a flexible, targeted way to help people develop the knowledge, skills and competences they need for their personal and professional development ."

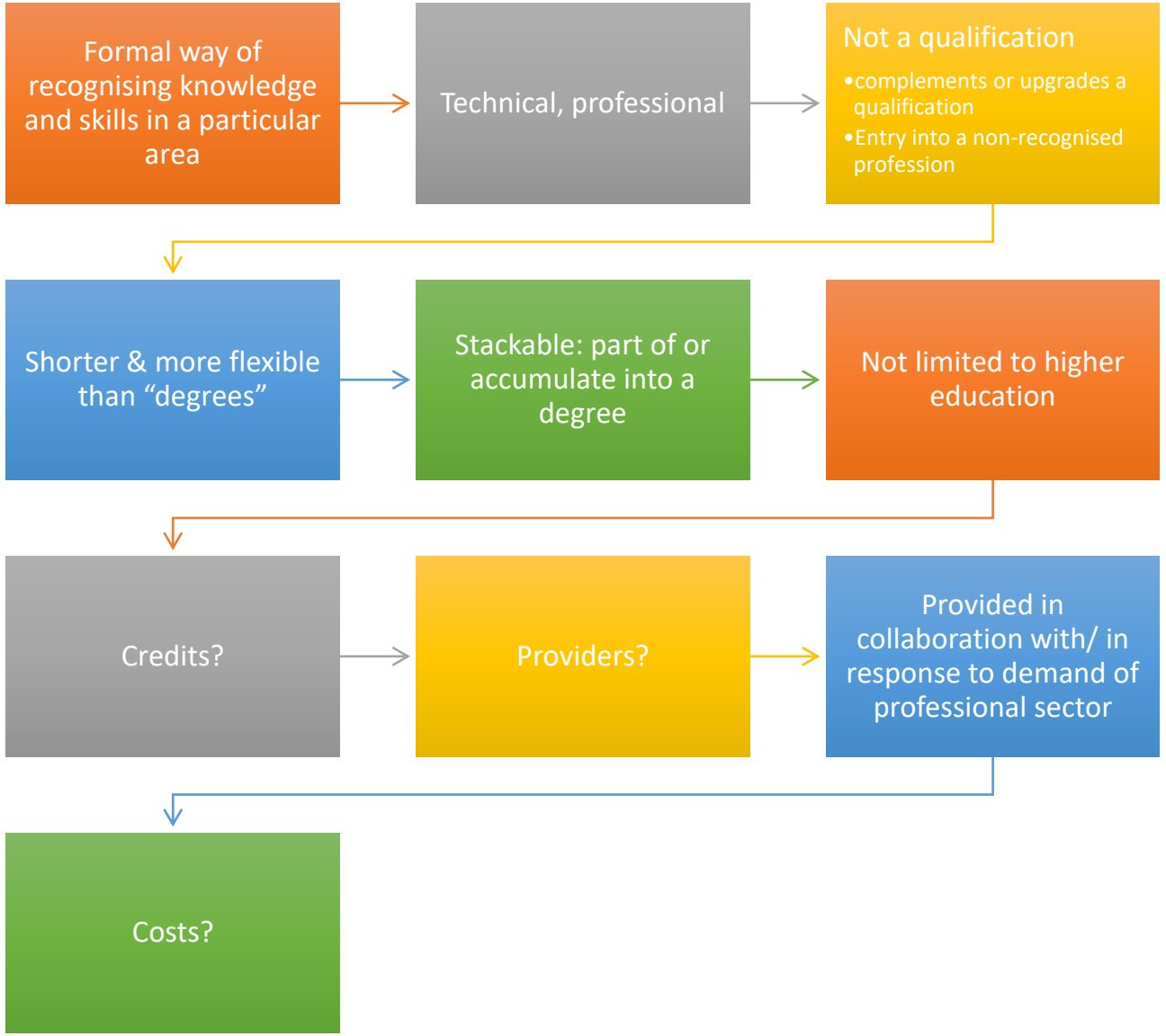
European Commission

"Micro-credentials verify, validate and attest that specific skills and/or competencies have been achieved and are endorsed by the issuing institution, having been developed through established faculty governance processes and designed to be meaningful and high quality."

SUNY Micro-Credentialing Task Force Report and Recommendations - https://system.suny.edu/media/suny/content-assets/documents/academic-affairs/Micro-Credentialing-TaskForce--Report.pdf

No commonly agreed definition (globally) –

but some agreed key characteristics and possible divergences



Report « Digitally Enhanced Learning and Teaching in European Higher Education Institutions » (DIGI-HE – EU-funded project)

DIGI HE

Survey to HE leadership –

368 responses from all 48 countries of EHEA – Jan. 2021

Purpose of short online courses?

Lifelong learning

Employability

Re- and upskill

- People in the workforce

Complement existing study programmes

- Students

Another step in the flexible learning path

Digi HE: Lifelong Learning - developments & perceptions

48%

digitalisation has contributed to major transformation in widening access

49%

reach out to new learner groups - one of the main motivations for offering MOOCs

growing demand for **short courses**

- 65% blended
- 53% online
- 44% on campus

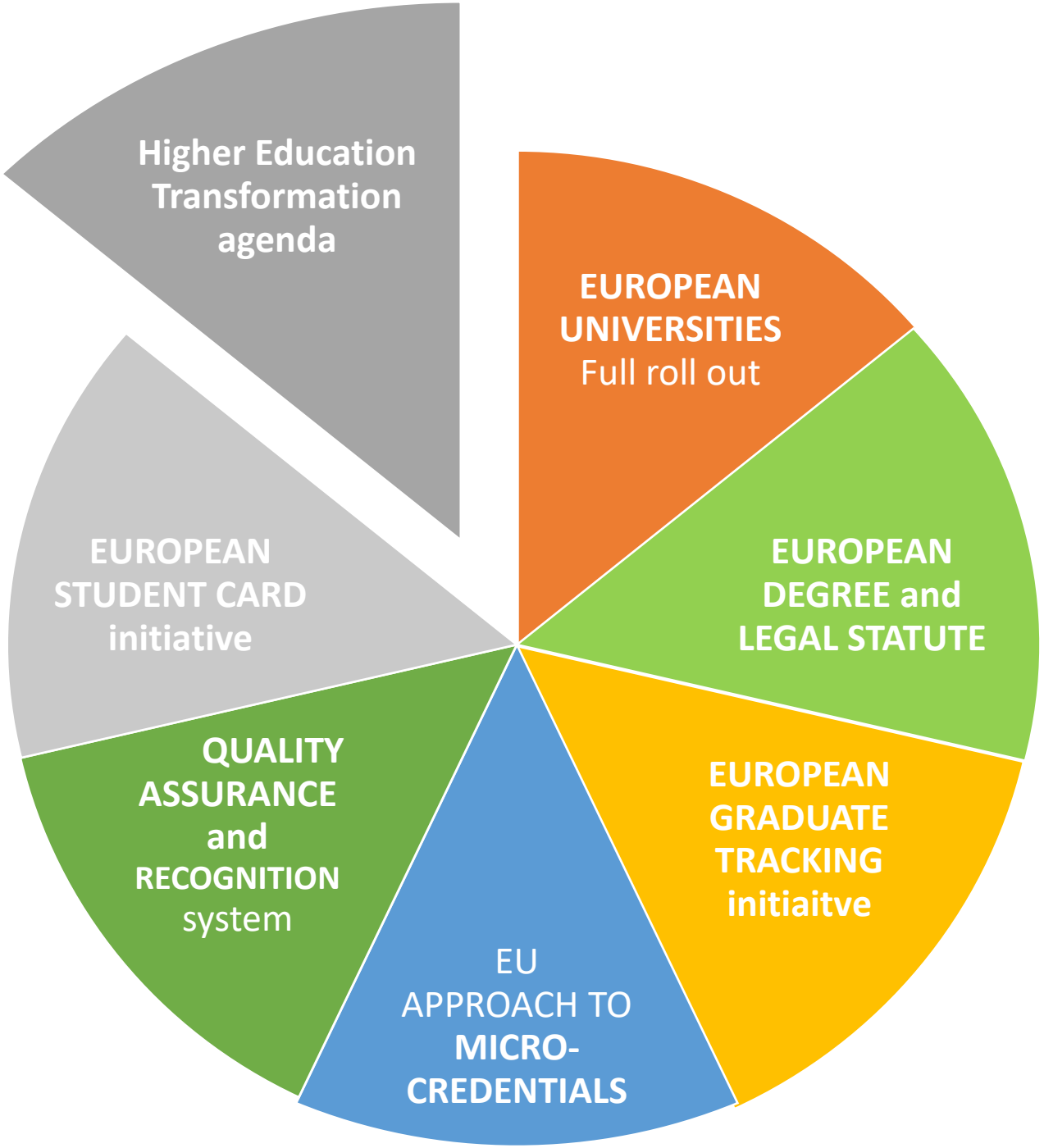
65%

mature and adult students are the main target of online learning

81%

widening access through digitalisation is a strategic development priority

The EU policy framework: Achieving a European Education Area by 2025



EU Council recommendation on micro-credentials (2022)

European Education Area
Quality education and training for all

Home | About EEA | Focus topics | Education levels | What's new? | Resources and tools | Funding

You are here: European Education Area / Education levels / Higher education / Micro-credentials

About education levels
Early childhood education and care
School education
Higher education
About higher education
Micro-credentials
European Universities Initiative
European Student Card Initiative
Relevant and high-quality higher education
Inclusive and connected higher education
Innovation in education

A European approach to micro-credentials

Flexible, inclusive learning opportunities

On 16 June 2022, the Council of the European Union (EU) adopted a Recommendation on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability . The Recommendation seeks to support the development, implementation and recognition of micro-credentials across institutions, businesses, sectors and borders.

An effective culture of lifelong learning is key to ensuring that everyone has the knowledge, skills and competences they need to thrive in their personal and professional lives.

Micro-credentials certify the learning outcomes of short-term learning experiences, for example a short course or training. They offer a flexible, targeted way to help people develop the knowledge, skills and competences they need for their personal and professional development.

Shorter forms of learning opportunities than traditional qualifications, such as micro-credentials, are being developed rapidly across Europe and around the world. These opportunities are made available by a wide

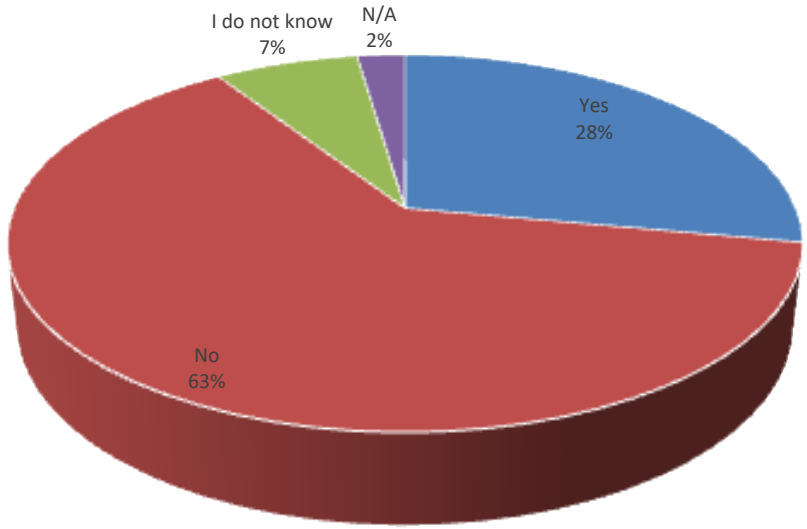
The Bologna Process Perspective:

- “Flexible and open learning paths, part of the original inspiration for the Bologna Process, are important aspects of student-centred learning and are in increasing demand in our societies. In addition to full degree programmes, many higher education institutions offer or plan to offer smaller units of learning, which enable learners to develop or update their cultural, professional, and transversal skills and competences at various stages in their lives. We ask the BFUG to explore how and to what extent these smaller, flexible units, including those leading to **microcredentials,** can be defined, developed, implemented and recognised by our institutions using EHEA tools.”

- *Rome Communiqué 2020*

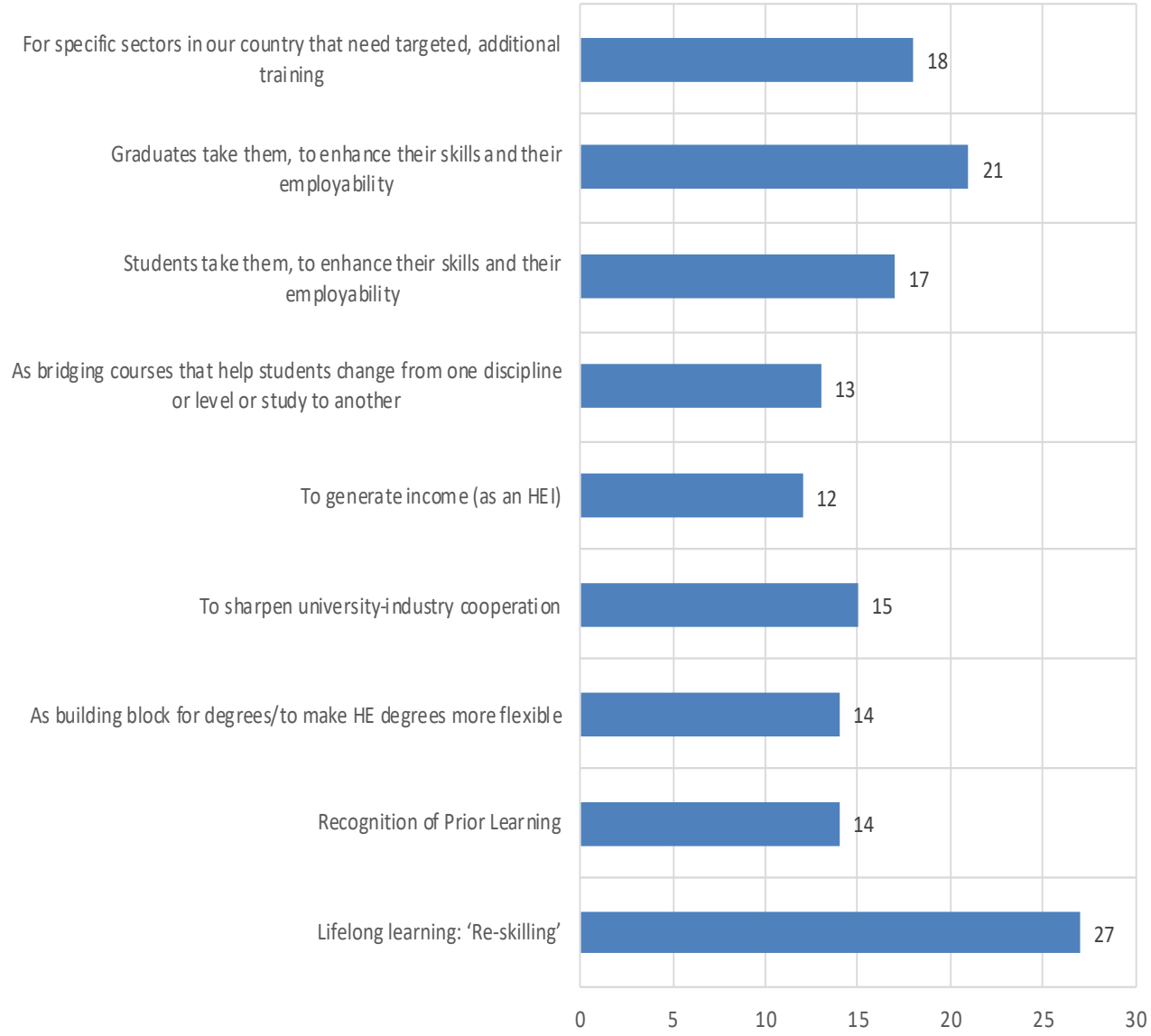
SPHERE virtual seminar November 2020: Pre-survey

- Is the expression of “micro-credential” used in your HE environment?

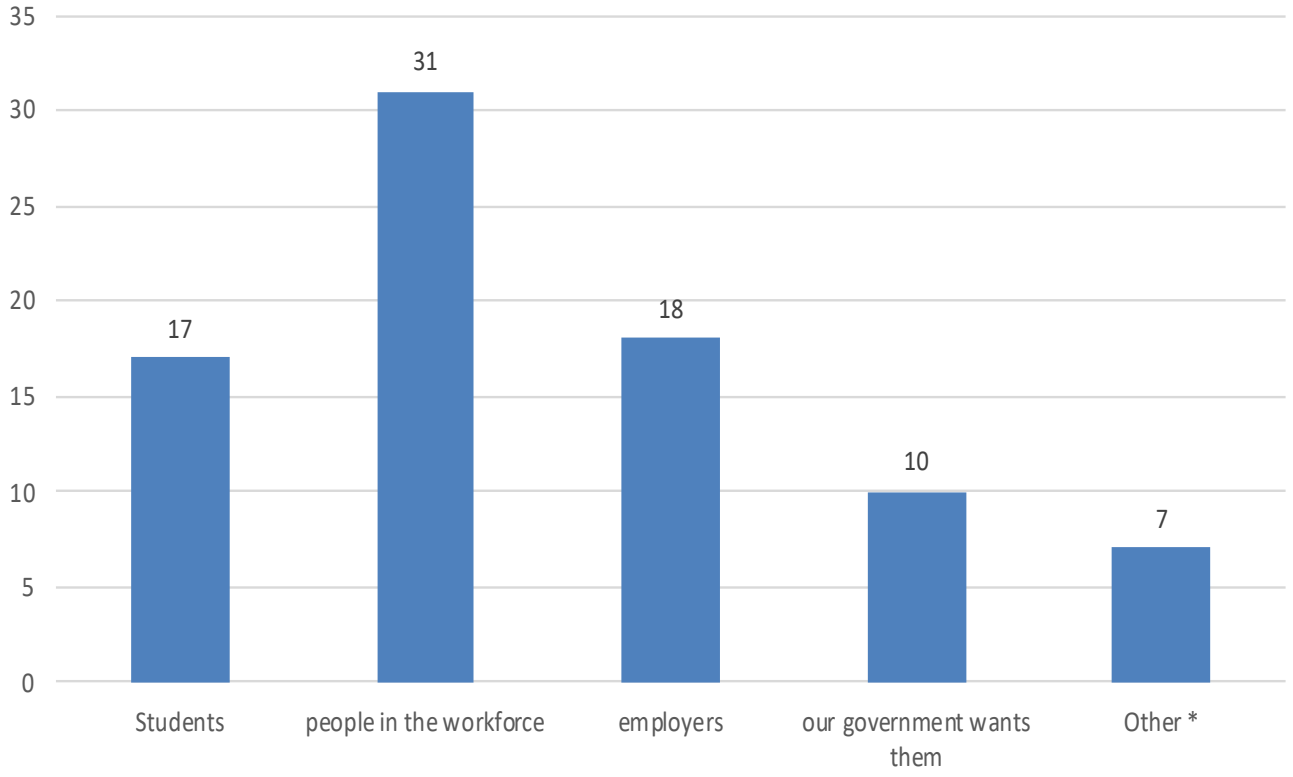


SPHERE virtual seminar November 2020: Pre-survey

- What are the purposes of micro-credentials in your country?

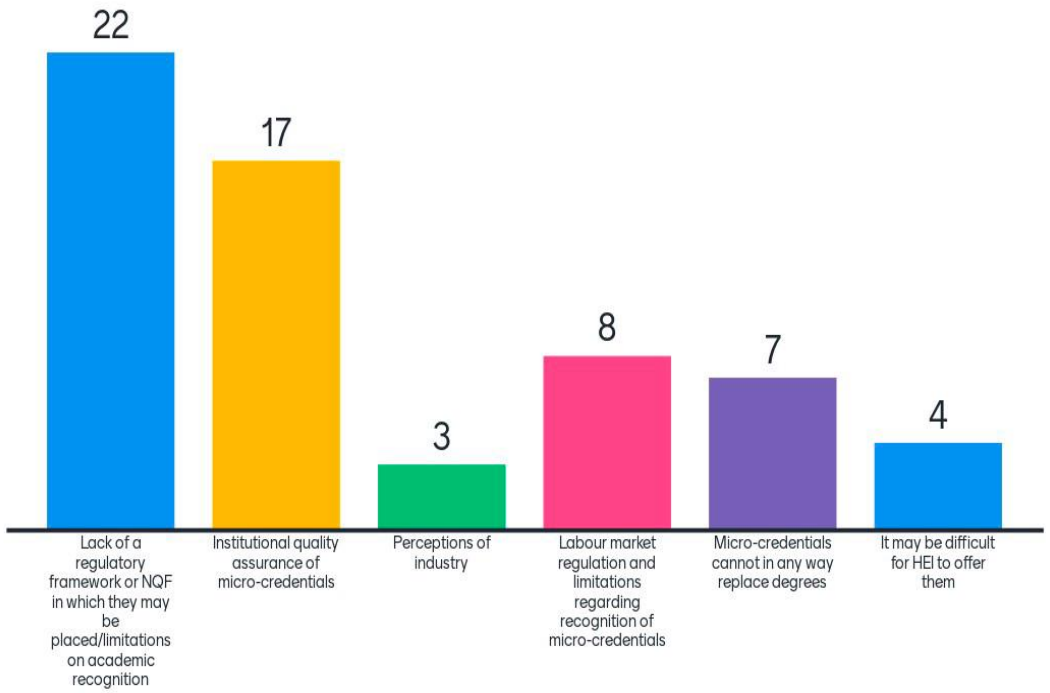


SPHERE virtual seminar November 2020: Pre-survey



Where is the demand for this type of credentialing coming from ?

My biggest concern for micro-credentials in my country is:



SPHERE virtual seminar November 2020: Post-Survey of participants

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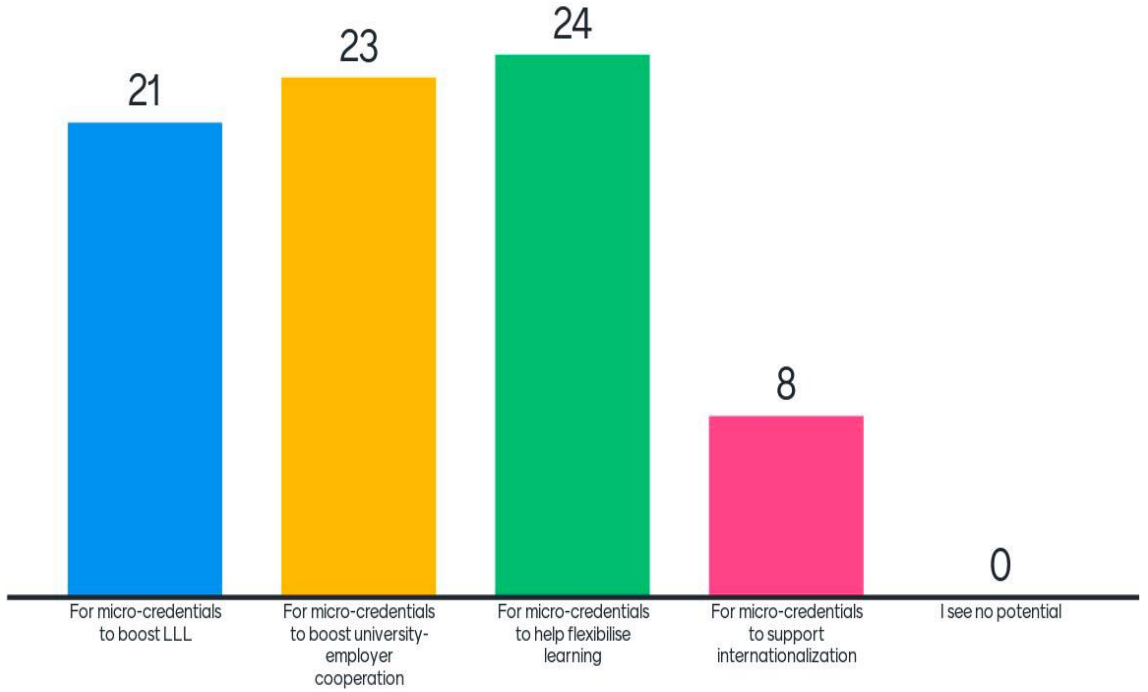
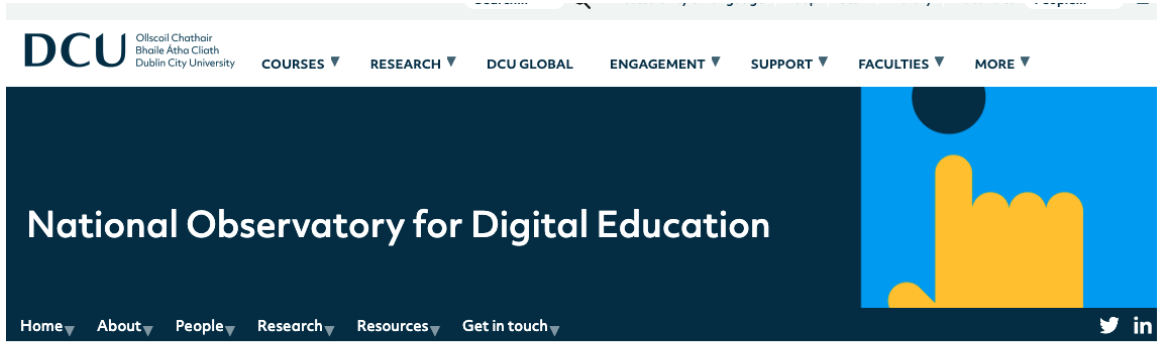
I see great potential:



So where do we go now?

Towards National Platforms, Observatories and joint endeavours: The Irish case



Micro-Credential Observatory

The Micro-Credential Observatory is a NODL initiative that aims to support research-informed policy and practice. It provides a regularly updated collection of major reports, policy initiatives and research-related publications on micro-credential growth in tertiary education and lifelong learning. We welcome suggestions for the inclusion of relevant publications.

- DCU Micro-credentials
- NIDL Activities
- NIDL Research
- Major Policy Initiatives
- National & International Reports
- Useful Reading: Articles, Books & Papers
- Events, Conferences and Webinars
- Microcredentials *Sans Frontières* Network

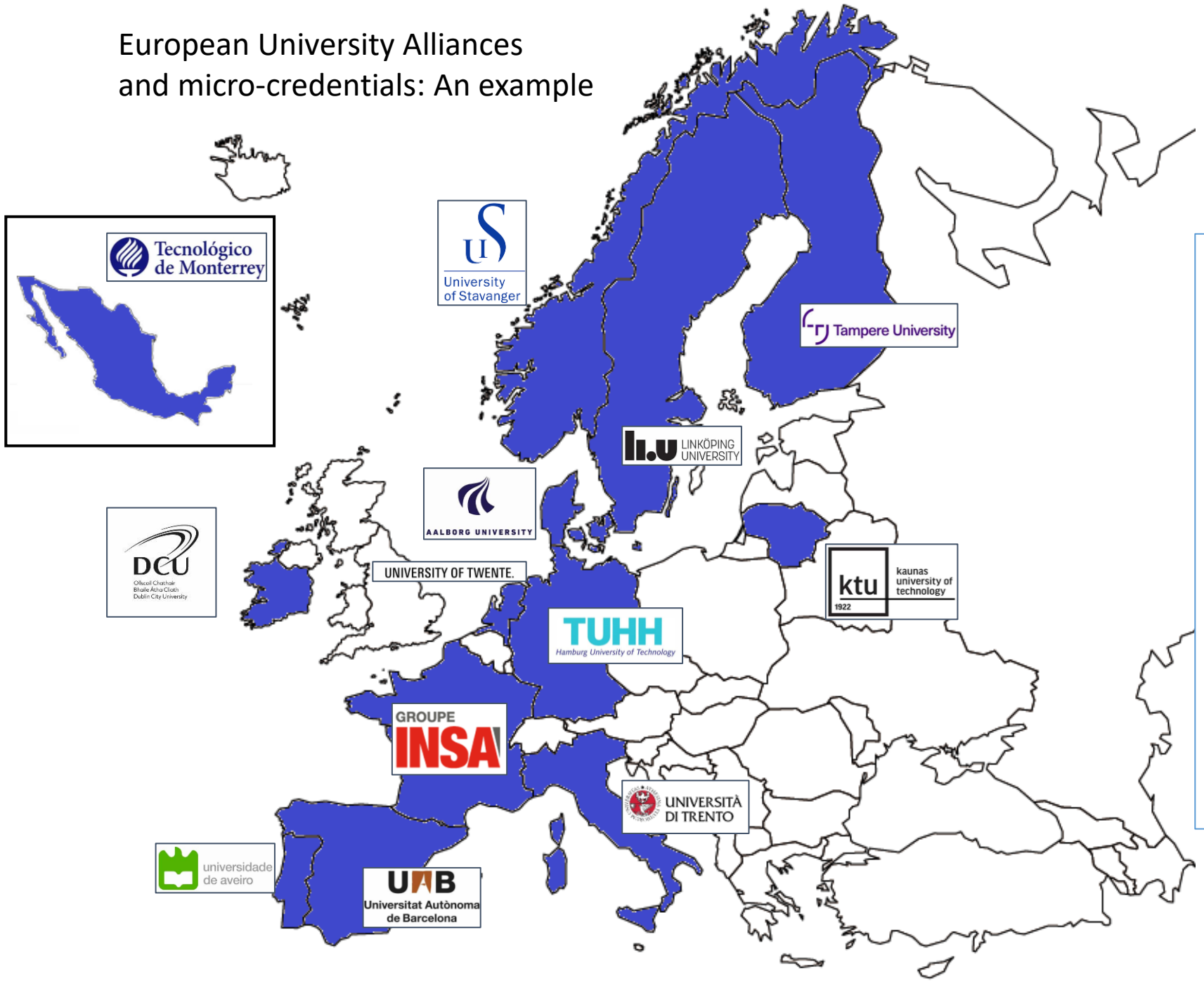
NIDL Quicklinks

- Research Outputs
- Research Projects
- Research Links
- Resource Bank
- Micro-credentials

Breaking barriers in flexibilization and digitalization or learning?

Towards institutional policies?

European University Alliances
and micro-credentials: An example



- Aalborg University, Denmark
- Dublin City University, Ireland
- Hamburg University of Technology, Germany
- Groupe INSA, France
- Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania
- Linköping University, Sweden
- Tampere University, Finland
- Tecnológico de Monterrey, Mexico
- Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain
- Universidade de Aveiro, Portugal
- University of Stavanger, Norway
- Università di Trento, Italy
- University of Twente, The Netherlands

Questions

- How relevant are the EHEA/EU approaches on this topic to your context?
- Do they address the main challenges of your system?
- How interested are HEIs or other stakeholders in your system in micro-credentials? And for what concrete use?
- What do you see as obstacles/ challenges for use and implementation?
- What can be learned from the latest EU/EHEA developments and trends?

Sources and additional reading on micro-credentials

EAIE Forum Employability for the 21st century

ENQA webinar Micro-credentials and the role of external quality assurance

European project MICROBOL (2021). Micro—credentials and Bologna Key commintments. State of the play in the European Higher Education area. ERASMUS+ & European Comission. February.

European Comission (2020). A European approach to micro-credentials background paper for the first meeting of the consultation group on micro-credentials 26 May 2020.

European project MICROBOL. (2021) Micro-credentials linked to the Bologna KeyCommitments.

Kelo, Maria The big new world of micro-credentials. Podcast. Director of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)

Malik, K. (2012). Effects of modular and traditional approaches on students' general comprehension. *Elixir Social Studies*, 42, 6228–6231. [Google Scholar]

Microcredentials.eu: contains key outputs from the recently completed MicroHE project and ongoing MICROBOL project.

Implementation of MOOCs for Micro-Credentials and European University Alliances (2023) : https://www.researchgate.net/publication/371226428_Implementation_of_MOOCs_for_Microcredentials_and_European_University_Alliances

BE Campus Micro-Credential Tool Kit: https://opentextbc.ca/bcmicrocredential/

Strategic Institutional Response to Micro-credentials: Key Questiona for Education Leaders (2023) : https://jime.open.ac.uk/articles/10.5334/jime.801

Holon IQ: Micro-credentials Global Survey: https://www.holoniq.com/notes/micro-credentials-global-panel-results?utm_campaign=Education%20General&utm_content=216581919&utm_medium=social&utm_source=linkedin&hss_channel=lcp-13709137