



**D06.7 - REPORT ON NATIONAL REGULATIONS ON
MICROCREDENTIALS**

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D06.7 – REPORT ON NATIONAL REGULATIONS ON MICROCREDENTIALS

1. INTRODUCTION

Regulations regarding microcredentials within the higher education sector vary among European countries and are subject to continuous developments. While the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) offers a foundational framework for higher education throughout Europe, individual countries maintain their own educational policies and regulations. While these regulations ideally ensure the implementation of the European framework, they can sometimes be challenging to modify within the context of national procedures.

Below, you'll find some general points and documents related to the regulation of microcredentials in higher education across Europe, which are usually indicated at European level, when examining topic of microcredentials:

- **European Qualifications Framework (EQF):** The EQF provides a common reference framework for comparing qualifications across different European countries. Microcredentials can be mapped to the EQF to help ensure their recognition and comparability.
- **National Recognition:** The recognition of microcredentials in higher education depends on national regulations and policies. Some countries have embraced microcredentials as part of their education systems, while others may not have specific regulations for them.
- **Quality Assurance:** Quality assurance mechanisms are essential for ensuring that microcredentials meet certain standards. This can include accreditation by relevant bodies or quality assessment processes at the national level.
- **Credit Transfer:** The ability to transfer credits earned through microcredentials may vary by country and institution. Some institutions and countries have developed credit transfer systems to recognize microcredentials within the broader education ecosystem.
- **EU Initiatives:** The European Commission has been promoting the use of microcredentials as part of its broader European Skills Agenda. Initiatives like the Europass platform and the Skills Agenda are designed to facilitate the recognition of skills and qualifications, including microcredentials, across the EU.
- **National Agencies:** In some countries, national agencies are responsible for regulating and overseeing higher education. These agencies may provide guidelines or regulations related to microcredentials.
- **Employer Recognition:** The recognition and value of microcredentials in the labour market can also vary by country. Some countries and industries may place a high value on microcredentials, while others may be less familiar with them.

In summary, the regulatory framework for microcredentials in Europe is still in the process of development. Current information on the regulation of microcredentials in higher education across European nations is primarily available on official websites of relevant national authorities, the European Commission, and other educational organizations. However, only a limited number of countries have begun implementing microcredentials so far. The European approach to microcredentials is anticipated to evolve and become more standardized over time as it is gradually adopted by more countries and better aligned with the evolving needs of both the labour market and the higher education sector.

2. NATIONAL REGULATION RELATED TO MICROCREDENTIALS

The legal landscape surrounding microcredentials in Europe lacks uniformity and varies from country to country and within the Arqus Alliance. However, as endorsed by the European Commission, there is a general trend towards the recognition and promotion of microcredentials showing that both, their demand and supply, are growing. Below is an overview of the current status regarding microcredentials at Arqus universities. Reference is made to respective national legal foundations as well as policy papers from individual universities, where available. Annex 1 provides information about exact national documents related to microcredentials together with their links.

GRANADA: Law of 29 September 2021 (art. 36) - *formación permanente* / lifelong learning: Universities are allowed to create their own official university titles; (art 37/8) - microcredentials or micromodules, less than 15 ECTS, learning results linked with learning activities short duration.

GRAZ: For the development of microcredentials, the University of Graz refers to the position paper of Austrian higher education and to the recommendations of the national Bologna Follow-up Group for the implementation of microcredentials in Austria. The development and implementation of Microcredentials is also included in the relevant development plans agreed with the Austrian Ministry of Education, Science and Research.

LYON 1: Law of 5 September 2018: a wide-ranging reform for the freedom to choose one's professional future, the vocational certification system in order to allow an efficient and emancipating skills approach to training. This law indicates that the professional certifications registered in the National Directory of Professional Certifications (RNCP) must be divided into blocks of competences. They represent a progressive way of accessing the certification, within the framework of a training program or a process of validation of acquired experience.

MAYNOOTH: initiative regarding microcredentials development was taken by government through funding offered for the universities through implementing MicroCreds national project, led by Irish Universities Association (IUA). This project delivered in partnership with seven founding IUA universities. After this initiative was launched, National Platform linked to a digital credentialing solution was developed (Europass early adopter). After that all participating universities, including Maynooth University, approved their internal regulations. At Maynooth University Framework for micro-credentials was approved by Academic Council in 2022. All micro-credentials are credit-bearing, their range is 5 to 15 ECTS.

MINHO: At the moment, there are no regulatory framework related to microcredentials approved by the Government. The University of Minho is defining internal regulation.

PADOVA: At the moment, there are no regulatory framework related to microcredentials approved by the Government. However, University started some internal initiatives and microcredentials are running as part of life-long learning modules.

VILNIUS: At the moment, there are no regulatory framework related to microcredentials approved by the Government. Another university (Vytautas Magnus) had a project named Digital Micro Credentials in Higher Education (MICRO CREDENTIALS), which was finished by August, 2023. However, the project was scientific and did not made any political proposals.

WROCLAW: At the moment, there are no regulatory framework related to microcredentials approved by the Government. Act of 20 July 2018 - Law on Higher Education and Science (Article art. 71 and 85)

describes in general procedures for confirming learning outcomes for learners (but only in the recruitment process).

30.10.2023: The Ministry of Education and Science has published general guidelines on the use of micro-credentials in the Polish system of higher education and science. These guidelines refer to forms of education leading to the issuance of micro-credentials within the meaning of the Recommendation of the Council of the European Union of 16 June 2022.

NOTE: *Leipzig University has opt-out from this initiative, thus situation about their national regulative framework and possible changes is not considered in this report.*

3. POTENTIAL OBSTACLES TO JOINT MICROCREDENTIALS

Joint microcredentials, involving cooperation between multiple institutions or organizations to deliver a unified microcredential programme and even short-learning programmes, is beneficial to offer learners a well-rounded skill set from different partner University's having the best background on specific topic. However, developing such framework and even single courses that could be stacked, shows possible obstacles that might appear.

These obstacles vary from different teaching methods and need to unify them to more broad issues, related to national regulations and possible barriers. All of them are mentioned below in more detailed way beginning from the teacher's perspective and moving to broader national context together with proposed solutions when working in the Alliance:

1. **Teaching and evaluation methods:** Institutions may have different standards for teaching and grading their students. Aligning these standards to ensure consistency and quality across the joint microcredential courses can be challenging. However, it's foreseen that collaborative work is beneficial to solve the issue and latest experience of the Alliances show that it is more and more easy solved even when developing a larger scale teaching activity such as Mobility window or Joint programme.
2. **Technology integration:** Using a common technology platform or learning management system for a joint microcredentials can be complex, as different institutions may have different systems and requirements. However, after Alliance initiative begun, it's foreseen as major step forward, because Alliances started to develop mutual learning management systems ensuring user-friendly platform for virtual/ blended courses development.
3. **Administrative complexities:** Coordinating multiple institutions or organisations to create, deliver, and manage joint microcredentials can be administratively complex. This includes aligning curricula, policies, and procedures across all partners. Even though this solution can be difficult to find, having experience from previous cooperation's and deciding the roles of each partner in the agreement is definitely an easy way to ensure coordination of the whole process.
4. **Discrepancies in timelines:** Institutions may have different academic calendars and scheduling, making it challenging to coordinate the timing of courses and even short-learning programme delivery. This possible obstacle is foreseen from previous experiences with joint programmes implementation. However, it should be clarified and discussed with partners at the very beginning.

Partner universities should keep in mind that microcredentials usually are implemented as part of the life-long learning courses and/ or included into the programme curriculum as one of the subjects – meaning that it can be prepared as intensive subject starting not from the early beginning of the semester, but from later on. In this case they are less dependent on academic calendars if such challenge appears.

5. **Financial and resource allocation:** Allocating resources, including funding and faculty time, can be a challenge, when multiple institutions or organisations are involved. Additionally, funding models and resource distribution may vary among partners. This seems to be one of the biggest challenges in microcredentials development process, however mutual agreement according to the internal regulations can be taken. Governing bodies of the Alliance and of the separate universities can be invited for the discussion regarding the financial obligations and fee policy development. Mutual Alliance level agreement is foreseen as possible solution for calculating resources allocation, including financial contribution, in future.

- 6. National regulations barriers:** Different countries or regions may have specific regulations related to education and credentialing. These regulations can create legal and logistical hurdles for joint microcredentials and short-learning programmes. As it was stated above in Chapter 2, in Arqus Alliance only few partners have regulations related to microcredentials implementation, thus for other partners it's an important step forward – to initiate national changes and to expect for national frameworks creation. Experiences from partners already implementing microcredentials can be taken as the example to cross possible national barriers.
- 7. Credit transfer and recognition:** Recognizing and transferring credits earned in a joint microcredentials and short-learning programmes in comparison to traditional degree programs can be problematic - institutions may have different policies for accepting microcredentials as credits. This challenge goes beyond national regulations, because is highly dependent on the situation in partner universities. Partner universities can only observe the political decisions at each country and encourage government to adjust them if needed, to ensure that credits are transferred and recognized among the partners.

4. CONCLUSION

To summarize, microcredentials seem to be a new type of study, which started to expand in 2021 when the concept was confirmed by European Commission. For this reason, microcredentials development is still new and ongoing process in most European countries. Situation among Arqus universities is similar, some already started development process, others still lacking initiative from local governments (even though European Approach towards microcredentials appeared in 2022).

Objectives of Arqus Alliance define aspiration to create effective barrier-free cooperation <...> in order to better respond to existing and emerging societal challenges; to develop joint evidence-based institutional learning and create attractive flexible challenge-based and research-driven academic offer. This aspiration is designed to develop different activities such as joint courses and modules; mobility windows and jointly prepared programmes, as well as jointly prepared microcredentials and short learning programmes.

To overcome potential obstacles mentioned in Chapter 3, governments, universities and other organisations involved in joint microcredentials should engage in thorough planning, establishing of clear agreements and governance structures, and maintaining open communication throughout the collaboration. It's also crucial for all interested parties to stay informed about relevant regulations and standards and be prepared to adapt to changes in the higher education landscape and the labour market, especially now, while the process is still new and quickly evolving. However, in order to move forward, it's especially crucial to universities and the Alliances to be involved in microcredentials development and actively contribute to their implementation policy creation.

5. ANNEX 1: DOCUMENTS REGULATING MICROCREDENTIALS IN ARQUS UNIVERSITIES

UNIVERSITY	NAME OF NATIONAL REGULATION DOCUMENT	LINK
Granada	Royal Decree 822/2021, regarding the organization of university study programmes and related quality assurance procedures	Royal Decree 822/2021, of September 28, which establishes the organization of university teaching and the procedure of quality assurance
Graz	General website of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research of the Republic of Austria on Micro Credentials (including all relevant documents for Universities)	Micro-credentials (bmbwf.gv.at)
Lyon 1	LAW n° 2018-771 of September 5, 2018 for the freedom to choose one's professional future.	LAW no. 2018-771 of September 5, 2018 for the freedom to choose one's professional future
Maynooth	MicroCreds national project, led by Irish Universities Association (IUA) and delivered in seven founding IUA universities.	MicroCreds national project
Minho	None	None
Padova	None	None
Wrocław	General guidelines on the use of micro-credentials in the Polish system of higher education and science Law on Higher Education and Science (Articles: 71 and 85)	Wytyczne w zakresie stosowania mikropoświadczeń w instytucjach szkolnictwa wyższego i nauki - Ministerstwo Edukacji i Nauki - Portal Gov.pl (www.gov.pl) Rozporządzenie Ministra Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego z dnia 27 września 2018 r. w sprawie studiów (eli.gov.pl)
Vilnius	None	None

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