Chances and Challenges of Recognition
Standards of Micro-credentials to increase Student Mobility

Brigitte Ilg & Dr. Petra Weber

GSI Conference Centre, 11-12 December 2023, Bonn
Overview

1. EU4DUAL
2. Strategy
3. Challenges
4. Chances
5. Discussion
EU4DUAL - A UNIVERSITY ALLIANCE TO BUILD THE FIRST TRANSNATIONAL UNIVERSITY FOR DUAL EDUCATION

MISSION

To educate future generations of young Europeans through practical training based on the dual-study model of education, closely linked to companies and organizations in order to support the business transformation of European regions.
A UNIVERSITY ALLIANCE TO BUILD THE FIRST TRANSNATIONAL UNIVERSITY FOR COOPERATIVE (DUAL) EDUCATION

Partners

Mondragon Unibertsitatea (ES)
Duale Hochschule Baden-Württemberg (DE)
FH Joanneum (AU)
Savonia AUS (FI)
ESTIA Institute of Technology (FR)
John von Neumann University (HU)
PAR University College (HR)
Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MT)
Koszalin University of Technology (PL)
Overview

1. Partner
2. Strategy
3. Challenges
4. Chances
5. Discussion
Self development

Students/Employee

Collaboration
Qualification
Research

Institutional development

HE Institutions

Business development

World of Work

MICROCREDENTIALS for LLL

Student-centred
Skills-focused
Challenge-based
Def.: Micro-Credentials

“A micro-credential is the record of the learning outcomes that a learner has acquired following a small volume of learning. These learning outcomes have been assessed against transparent and clearly defined standards.

Courses leading to micro-credentials are designed to provide the learner with specific knowledge, skills and competences that respond to societal, personal, cultural or labour market needs.

Micro-credentials are owned by the learner, can be shared and are portable. They may be standalone or combined into larger credentials. They are underpinned by quality assurance following agreed standards in the relevant sector or area of activity.”

European Commission (2021)
“Overall, respondents across all stakeholder categories agreed that the most important characteristics of a high-quality micro-credential was the recognition / acceptance by employers followed by quality assurance based on transparent quality standards; recognition by education and training organisations and recognition by national authorities. The participants considered availability in native language and their usefulness for cross-border mobility (portability) to be the least important aspects.”

(European Commission 2022, p. 15)
Analysis of the Commission proposal on micro-credentials for the German education system

**Strengths**
- Potential for flexibilisation
- Improvement of the adaptability of the training system
- Reinforcement of lifelong learning
- Strengthening of market-oriented continuing training provision

**Weaknesses**
- Vague definition in the Commission proposal
- Absence of differentiation by educational sectors
- Outstanding issue of the subsidiarity of European actions

**Opportunities**
- Entry of institutes of higher education into the continuing training market
- Greater individualisation of continuing training provision

**Threats**
- Increase in the pressure for modularisation
- Financial/administrative expense
- Structural changes to the education system
- Legal certainty
- Quality assurance
- Alignment of MCs to the DQR
- Validity of existing qualifications

Overview

1. Partner
2. Strategy
3. Challenges
4. Chances
5. Discussion
While the Diploma Supplement provides the most crucial information about higher education degrees for international recognition purposes, there is currently no standardised way of describing micro-credentials.

The reasons for a shortage of understanding of micro-credentials and insufficient trust in them are due to a lack of transparency.

The variability of information makes it difficult for learners, employers, higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies to understand the value and content of micro-credentials and to compare them.

The result is a lack of recognition of micro-credentials, whether for further learning purposes or in a labour market context. Therefore, a list of critical information elements that any micro-credential must provide should be developed. This list of critical information elements would constitute an EU standard on micro-credentials.

Overview

1. Partner
2. Strategy
3. Challenges
4. Chances
5. Discussion
Our Approach

Recognition standards set by a clearinghouse

Def.: Clearinghouse

“A clearinghouse for micro-credentials is a platform that gathers and showcases verified digital badges and micro-credentials earned through various learning activities, such as online courses, workshops, and alternative educational programs.

It serves as a centralized hub that allows learners to share, store, and showcase their accomplishments and competencies, while also helping employers and institutions to identify and validate individuals' skills and knowledge.”

https://microcreds.ie/ (2022)
Micro-credentials present a chance to offer specialized skills and knowledge that complement traditional degrees, making graduates more competitive in the job market.

By establishing consistent recognition standards and promoting their value, micro-credentials can become a valuable tool for increasing student mobility and fostering lifelong learning.
All recognition processes, especially those involving non-traditional credentials, can be sped up through the use of an online database (clearing house) which

- provides comprehensive information on the qualification and credential – transparency,

- allows the adequate identification of institutions involved,

- verifies that the student presenting the credential was awarded it by the institution that they claim awarded it,

- contains a repository of all credentials earned by their owner for purposes of accumulation and portability.
The implementation and recognition of micro-credentials will facilitate and strengthen student mobility e.g. by short-term student mobilities, whether in person or virtually.

Summer & Winter Schools offer an opportunity to participate in highly interactive and international educational activities.

Taking short courses and other forms of education resulting in micro-credentials, offered by the Alliance universities in virtual or blended learning format, can also be seen as a measure to customize student education pathways and provide them with international experience.

Greater transparency and portability of micro-credentials has immense potential for enhancing student mobility and career success.
## Outlook

### Recognition process

**Step-by-step guide**

1. Establish the Clearinghouse
2. Defining Recognition Standards
3. Consultation and Recommendation
4. Voluntary Recognition
5. Appeal / Review Process
6. Continuous Improvement
7. Promote Awareness
8. Evaluation
Overview

1. Partner
2. Strategy
3. Challenges
4. Chances
5. Discussion
Increasing Student Mobility & Validation of Prior Learning

Questions

• Do you know recognition standards in general?
• Can you describe the recognition process at your institution?
• How to create recognition standards of MCs?
• How to create recognition standards of MCs to increase student mobility?
• What about validation of prior learning within your institution?
• ...
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

Brigitte Ilg
Director International Office
Head of Internationalization - EU4DUAL
brigitte.ilg@dhbw-heidenheim.de

Dr. Petra Weber
Research, Innovation and Transfer
petra.weber@dhbw-heidenheim.de