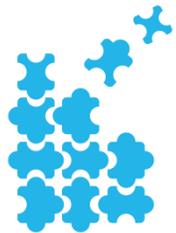


Using Bologna tools for the flexible learning paths of the future: the QF -EHEA, ECTS and micro-credentials

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EUROPEAN
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ITALIAN **BFUG** SECRETARIAT
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UNIVERSITÀ DI PISA

Summary

Context

State of Affairs

Foreseen outcomes and open questions

In Paris, in 2018, the Bologna Follow Up Group (BFUG) was mandated to develop ‘**future priorities**’ for the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) looking at a time frame of the next decade.

This was done in two ways:

- **Consultations** with stakeholders at national level (of the 48 EHEA countries and also some of the consultative members such as EUA and ESU)
- Discussions and **parallel sessions** at the BFUG meetings themselves

The result: **“Our Vision”**:

An EHEA which is:

- Inclusive**
- Innovative**
- Interconnected**

And, among other aspects, includes “flexible and open learning paths” including “smaller, flexible units, including those leading to microcredentials”

*Flexible and open learning paths, part of the original inspiration for the Bologna Process, are important aspects of **student-centered 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 micro-credentials**, can be defined, developed, implemented and recognised by our institutions using EHEA tools*

Society is changing, **at various stages in their lives** (including before, during, and after a possible degree programme at a higher education institution), citizens will need:

new competences:

- technical, organizational, upskilling in their profession
 - reskilling as societal and economic needs change
- but also
- personal and cultural competences of different sorts (including artistic, creative, interpersonal ...).

Can these new **flexible paths and smaller units of learning** fit into the EHEA with its existing tools?



Micro-credentials are not new: there are already many and they are rapidly expanding in the whole world and in the EHEA too.

They usually are not called ‘microcredentials’, they have many names.

Often they are offered on-line and by providers that are **not** higher education institutions.

Several projects are in progress to define MCs in Europe.



MICROBOL specifically regards the EHEA and EHEA tools.

- **Kickoff** on 31 August
- **Report** (online) on micro-credentials around the world.
- **Working definition** of MCs
- **Survey** now in progress in all EHEA countries (15 October to 15 November)

MICROBOL

Three working groups, one for each Bologna “Key Commitment”:

- QF for EHEA, ECTS
- Lisbon recognition convention and DS
- ESG (Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA)



Initial ideas:

For “smaller units of learning” or “micro-credentials”:

- Level can be defined in terms of **QF-EHEA**, and thus also according to the NQFs of our EHEA countries;
- **ECTS credits** can be used, based on Learning Outcomes and volume of learning;
- ECTS Recognition of Prior Learning (**RPL**) procedures allow higher education institutions to recognize MCs offered by other providers....

Open questions:

Should MCs have a **range of 'sizes'** (numbers of credits)?

- Or should all be, say, 5 credits?

Can there be **very small units** of learning?

- Perhaps called **'nano-credentials'**?

Can the small credentials be **stacked**?

- that is, **accumulated**, and recognized as part of a 'normal' degree programme?

Will higher education institutions recognize the **importance of providing such units**, as part of their mission and duty to society?

The answers will come in the future.

I am confident that 'Bologna' tools and the EHEA cooperation itself will continue to be relevant in the coming decade, in this specific context too, and that we will do our best to make it so.

Thank you!
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www.ehea.info
<https://microcredentials.eu/>