

Country report - POLAND

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Summary

The report presents methodology and results of quantitative and qualitative research on availability and content of micro-credentials provided by higher education institutions in Poland.

The study consisted of an online survey sent to active Polish HEIs and responded by 60 of them, which was completed with detailed case studies on content and organization of micro-credentials in three Polish institutions. The study revealed that only 13 HEI taking part in the survey declared to provide micro-credentials/small volume of learning. The case studies allowed for in-depth analysis of content and organization of micro-credentials in HEIs. Interviews with HEIs' staff members, made it possible to consider also the motivation behind decisions on information presentation, resulting from the HEI's development strategy and the requirements of national law.

The main conclusions from the study are:

- the majority of Polish HEIs are not familiar with "micro-credentials / small volume of learning", and as a result, only a small number of them declared that they offer this learning opportunity;
- Polish HEIs that offer micro- credentials have different understandings of this terminology and provide them in different ways.

Country report general methodology

This survey is conducted as part of case studies within ERASMUS+ project “Online course catalogues and databases for transparency and recognition 2” (OCTRA 2), which objective is to promote a dialogue between credential evaluators at ENICs and NARICs and HEIs by agreeing on a template for the structure of course catalogues, including smaller learning units (i.e. micro-credentials) that would guide to structured and transparent descriptions of HE qualifications.

The quantitative survey was distributed to all institutions of science and higher education registered in *the Integrated System of Information on Science and Higher Education POL-on*. The survey was complemented by qualitative assessment of micro-credentials of three HEIs:

- a public university with broad education offer,
- a public HEI specialised in specialised in engineering, public safety and medicine,
- a public HEI specialised in economics.

Detailed methodology for each part of the research will be presented before description of the results of that part.

Concepts and terminology

Based on the pre-research done to organize quantitative and qualitative research activities for OCTRA 2 project, the concept of micro-credentials is not a very clear one in the general awareness. Higher Education Institutions rarely use this term as name of trainings, courses and another forms of learning offered by them. The term itself has not been defined by law either.

The terminology used by the Council of the European Union is as follows:

“Micro-credential” means the record of the learning outcomes that a learner has acquired following a small volume of learning. These learning outcomes will have been assessed against transparent and clearly defined criteria. Learning experiences leading to microcredentials are designed to provide the learner with specific knowledge, skills and competences that respond to societal, personal, cultural or labour market needs.

“Stackability” means the possibility, where relevant, to combine different microcredentials and build logically upon each other. Decisions to “stack” or combine credentials lie with the receiving organisation (e.g. education and training institutions, employers, etc.) in line with their practices and should support the goals and needs of the learner.

Chapter 1 – Overall situation in country

1.1 Existing recommendations of regulatory framework regarding course micro credentials

Poland does not have specific regulatory framework regarding micro-credentials or recognition of micro-credentials.

In the Act of 20 July 2018 – Law on Higher Education and Science it is mentioned in art. 162 that higher education institutions may provide other forms of education. There is one reference regarding provision of other than degree programmes forms of education, this could include micro-credentials. A person who has completed another form of education obtains a document confirming the completion of that form of education. The type and template of the document is determined by the entity providing this form of education.

There are no specific regulations concerning recognition of micro-credentials. However, article 85 of the Act of 20 July 2018 – Law on Higher Education and Science stipulates that a student has the right to have their ECTS credits transferred and recognised on the principles laid down in the study regulation. A micro-credential could be recognised towards further studies on the basis of the mentioned regulation.

1.2 Analysis of data from HEIs survey

1.2.1 Time and technical organization of data collection

After consultation with project coordinator and partners, the decision was made to conduct the survey in the national language. The motivation for the decision was to make it easier for the HEIs to understand and fill the questionnaire in order to ensure higher response rate. The expectation was also that more HEIs will respond to open questions if they can do it in national language. However, terminology of the survey was provided in two languages (English and Polish) to minimize the risk of terminological doubts.

The questionnaire was made available to the HEIs on **08 may 2023** in the afternoon and the collection of replies was open till **24 may 2023**, which means the survey was available for full 16 days (including 13 full working days).

The request was initially sent to 397 Polish HEIs, both public and non-public ones, including HEIs run by religious institutions but excluding all HEIs undergoing the process of liquidation. Their email addresses were generated from POL-on - the Integrated System of Information on Science and Higher Education.

Taking into account the difficulties caused by non-working, non-updated e-mail addresses and technical problems with mailing, successful delivery was confirmed to 350 Polish HEIs.

The survey was conducted online with use of the application form from Microsoft Forms, which is generally used for broad scope research surveys conducted by NAWA.

The email with the link to the survey contained information about the project OCTRA 2 itself and explanation of the objectives of the questionnaire in particular.

Number of complete responses received was 60. One HEI passed a questionnaire twice.

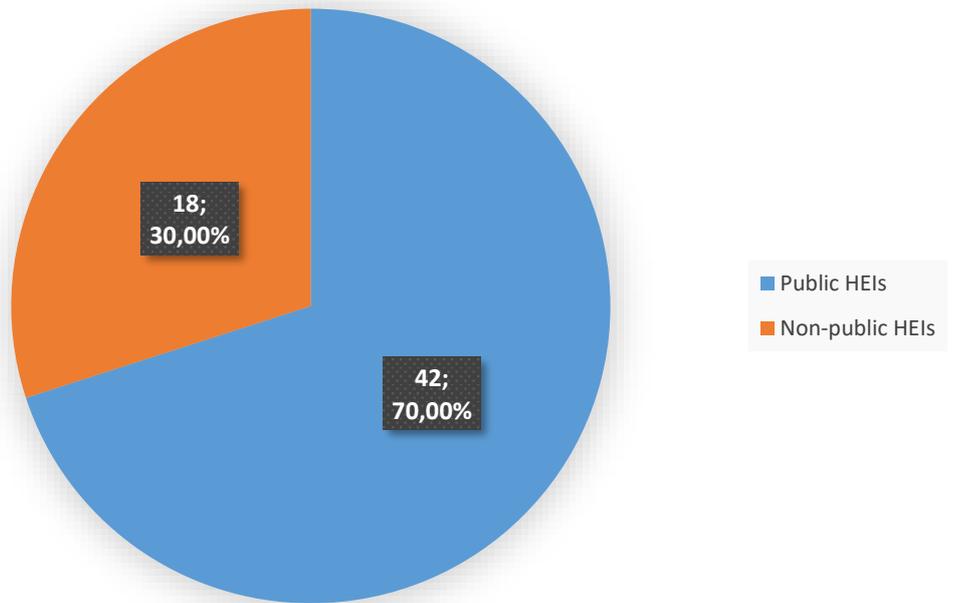
42 responses came from **public HEIs** (including all their types and specializations: universities, universities of technology, HEIs specialised in art studies and sport-related education, military and other public service HEIs).

18 responses were received from **non-public HEIs**.

The overall **response rate was 17%**.

It is worth remembering for comparison with results provided further that almost twice as much public institutions in relation to non-public ones provided their responses.

Type of the institutions

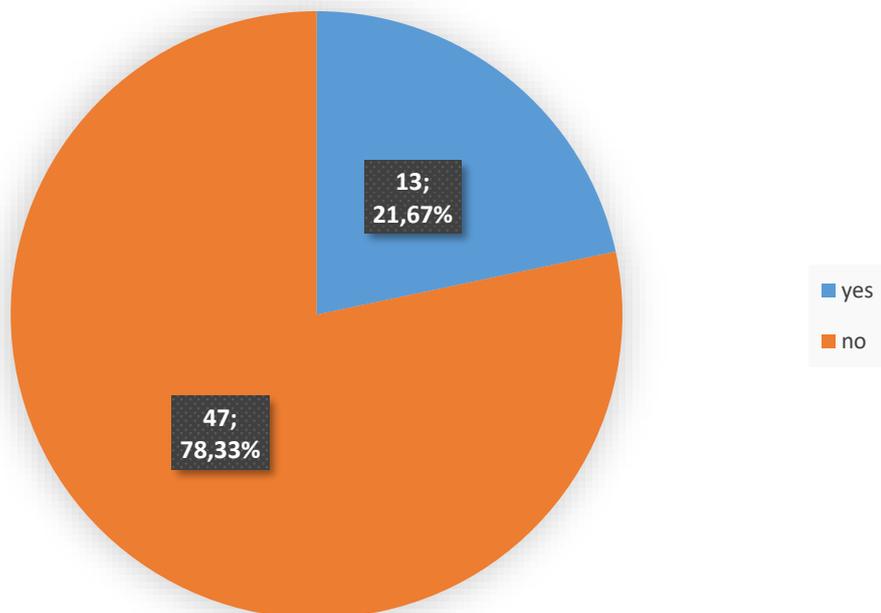


Responses	%	Number
Public HEIs	30,00%	18
Non-public Heis	70,00%	42

1.2.2 Results presentation question by question

1. Does your institution provide micro-credentials/small volume of learning?

Does your institution provide micro-credentials/small volume of learning?



Responses	%	Number
Yes	21,67%	13
No	78,33%	47

Total number of responses: 60

13 HEI taking part in the survey declared to provide micro-credentials/small volume of learning, among them 10 public and 3 non-public HEIs.

In other terms, micro-credentials/small volume of learning are provided by the 76,92% of the public HEIs, 23,08 % of non-public HEIs.

On the other hand, **47** HEI admitted that don't provide micro-credentials/small volume of learning (32 public and 15 non-public HEIs). So, micro-credentials/small volume of learning are not provided by the 68,09 % of the public HEIs, 31,91 % of non-public HEIs.

One HEI, that passed a questionnaire twice, have chosen both responses: "YES" and "NO".

According to the survey results, only 21,67% of the HEI provide micro-credentials/small volume of learning.

Moreover, there is a significant difference in the approach between public and non-public HEIs, eventually public HEIs were more likely to provide micro-credentials/small volume of learning.

However, there are two more issues to consider:

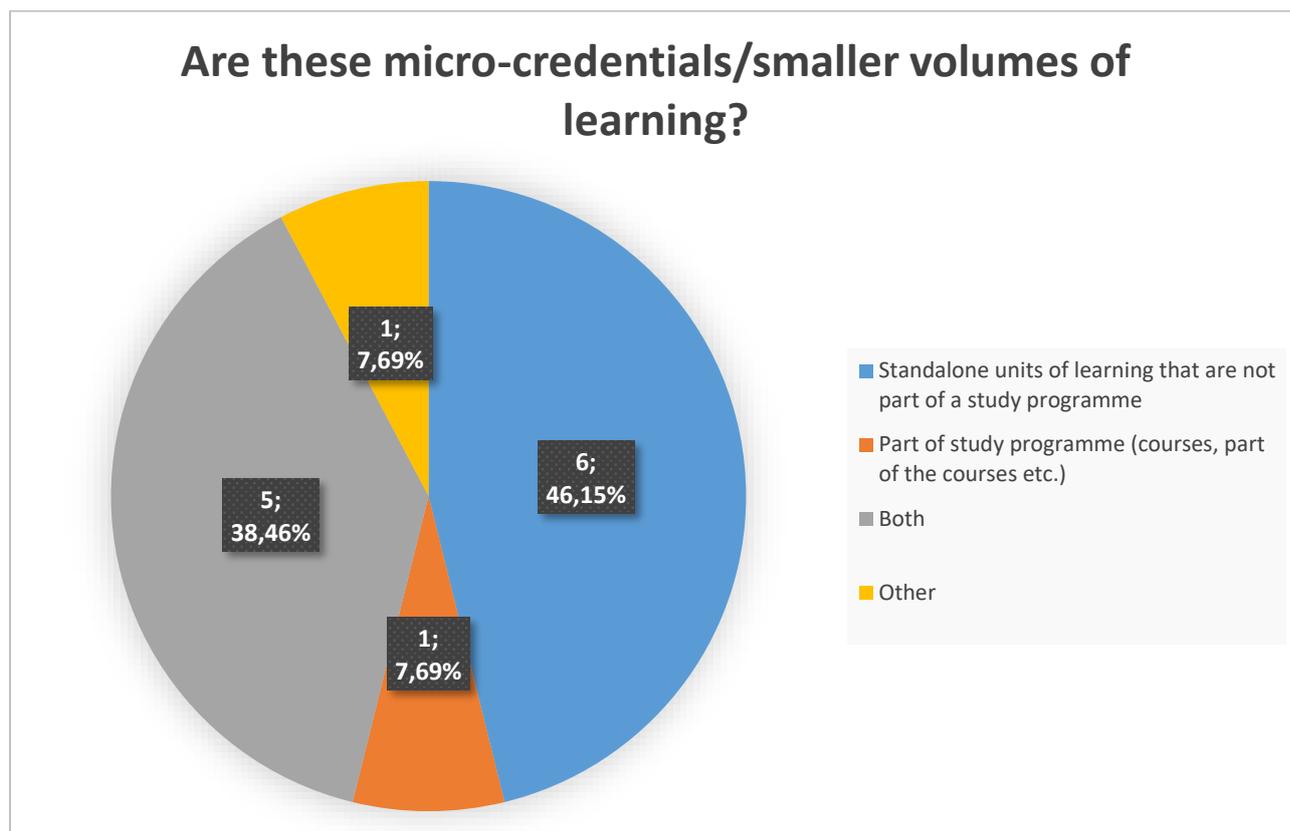
1) the HEIs that don't provide micro-credentials/small volume of learning might have been more interested to fill the survey than the ones who do it, so, although all groups and types of HEIs were represented in the survey, with regard to all HEIs functioning in Poland the percentage of providing micro-credentials/small volume of learning may be a bit higher;

2) what does it exactly mean "micro-credentials/small volume of learning" in the Polish conditions, taking into account that the term itself is not defined by national provisions and also not commonly used by the institutions.

The second question is relevant especially in the context of questions directed to the survey coordinator by the participants, seeking to confirm if available courses provided by HEI can actually count as the "micro-credentials/small volume of learning" or not.

HEIs that don't provide micro-credentials/small volume of learning did not continue to participate in the survey.

2. Are these micro-credentials/smaller volumes of learning?



Responses	%	Number
Standalone units of learning that are not part of a study programme	46,15%	6
Part of study programme (courses, part of the courses etc.)	7,69%	1
Both	38,46%	5
Other	7,69%	1

Total number of responses: 13

The majority of the HEIs (11 from 13) have chosen one of the following answers: a) standalone units of learning that are not part of a study programme and c) both.

Among them over 46% of the respondents declared that micro-credentials mean standalone units of learning that are not part of a study programme.

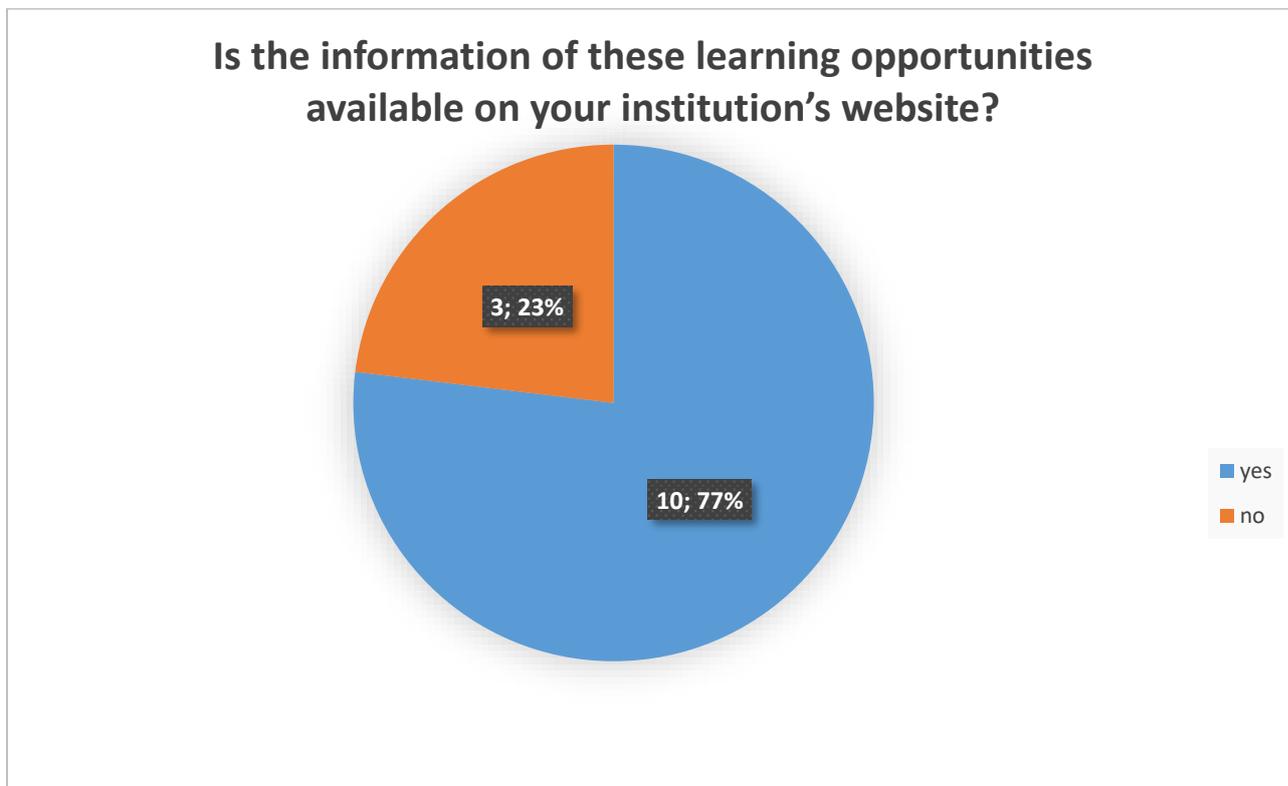
About 38% of the HEI selected the option "Both": Standalone units of learning that are not part of a study programme and Part of study programme (courses, part of the courses etc.).

Taking into account the overall numbers of HEIs providing micro-credentials, it shows there is no particular difference in the approach between the public and non-public group.

One public HEI declared that micro-credentials are the part of study programme (courses, part of the courses etc.)

There was only one case where public HEI indicated another - specific type of the micro-credentials/smaller volumes of learning. This is certification for marketable qualifications in the MQF system.

3. Is the information of these learning opportunities available on your institution’s website?



Responses	%	Number
Yes	77%	10
No	23%	3

Total number of responses: 13

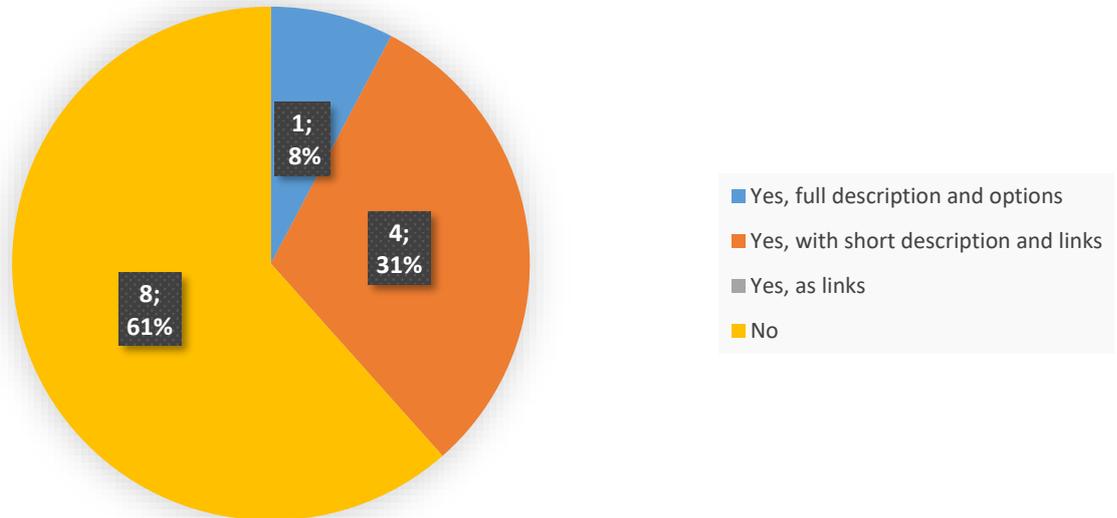
The majority of the respondents (77%) declared that HEI place the information about micro-credentials/small volume of learning on their websites.

Among the ones who have such information on websites are 7 public and all 3 non-public HEIs, which amounts respectively to 70% and 30% of the group.

Only about 23% (which actually meant 3 HEIs) answered negative, i.e. information of these learning opportunities isn’t available on websites.

4. If information is available on outside information sources, does institutions webpage provide information on these learning opportunities?

If information is available on outside information sources, does institutions webpage provide information on these learning opportunities?



Responses	%	Number
Yes, full description and options	8%	1
Yes, with short description and links	31%	4
Yes, as links	0,00%	0
No	61%	8

Total number of responses: 13

Over 60 % of the HEIs responded that institutions webpage don't provide information about micro-credentials/small volume of learning if such information is available on outside information sources.

About 31% of the respondents declared that webpage provide only short description micro-credentials and links.

However, none of the respondents mentioned that that HEI webpage provide only links on micro-credentials/small volume of learning description.

Only 1 HEI selected the option "Full description and options".

It should be noted that there is no a difference in approach between public and non-public HEIs in this issue.

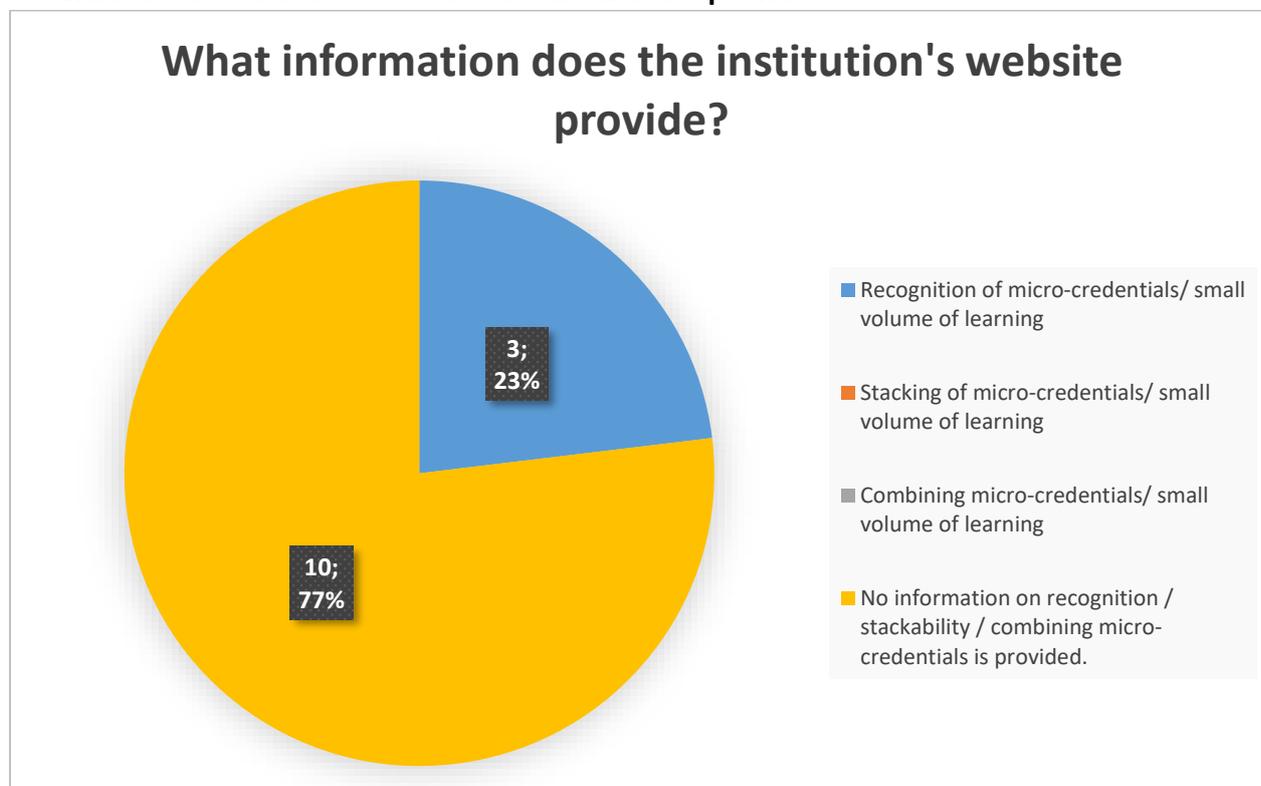
5. If information is available on other information sources, please list them.

Only 4 respondents from 13 answered this question. Accordingly, HEI mentioned the following information sources:

- Facebook;

- HEI social media;
- HEI e-commerce platform;
- Polish Bank Association (ZBP) website, NZB programme website, Santander Universidades programme website.

6. What information does the institution's website provide?



Responses	%	Number
Recognition of micro-credentials/ <u>small volume of learning</u>	23,00%	3
No information on recognition / stackability / combining micro-credentials is provided.	77,00%	10
Combining micro-credentials/ <u>small volume of learning</u>	0%	0
Stacking of micro-credentials/ <u>small volume of learning</u>	0%	0

Total number of responses: 13

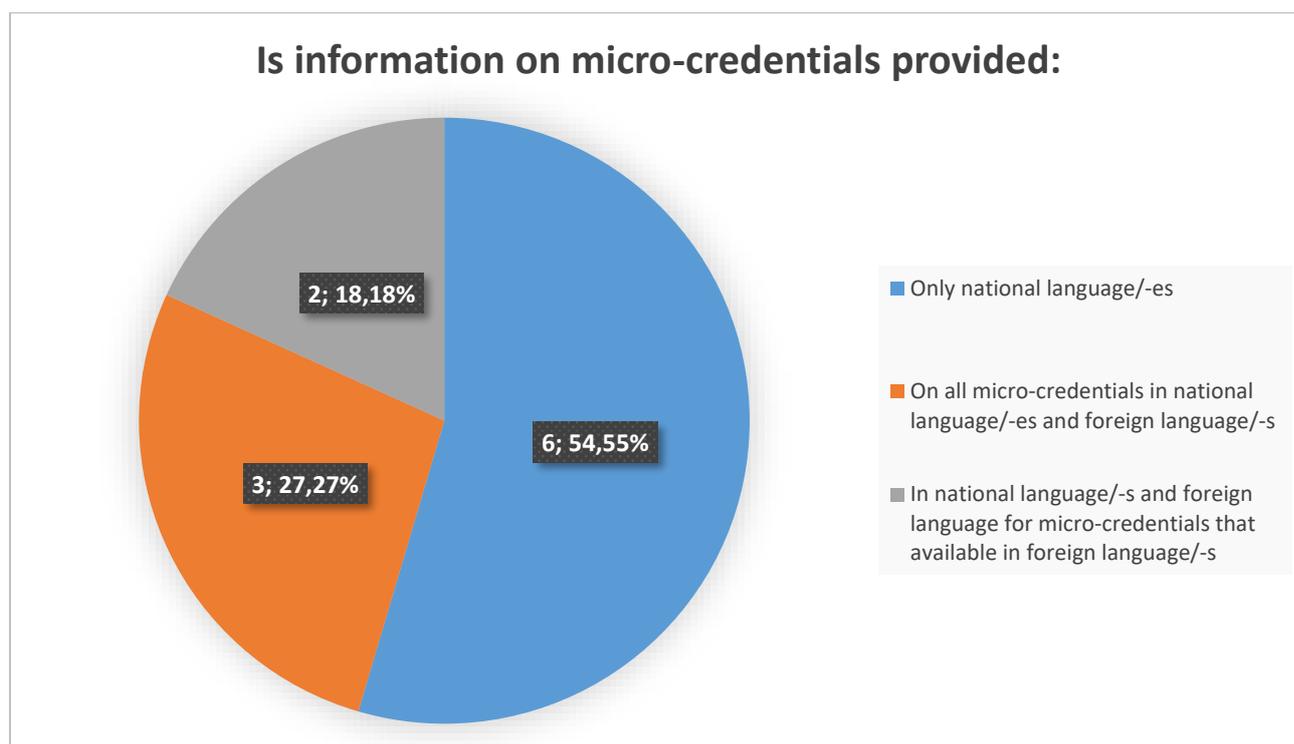
According to the survey results, 77% of the respondents (which actually meant 10 HEIs) declared that no information on recognition / stackability / combining micro-credentials is provided by the institution's website.

Only 3 HEI (23%) responded that their website provides information on recognition of micro-credentials/ small volume of learning.

None of the respondents mentioned about stacking of micro-credentials/ small volume of learning and Combining micro-credentials/ small volume of learning.

In this question there is no a difference in approach between public and non-public HEIs.

7. Is information on micro-credentials provided?



Responses	%	Number
Only national language/-es	54,55%	6
On all micro-credentials in national language/-es and foreign language/-s	27,27%	3
In national language/-s and foreign language for micro-credentials that available in foreign language/-s	18,18%	2

Total number of responses: 11

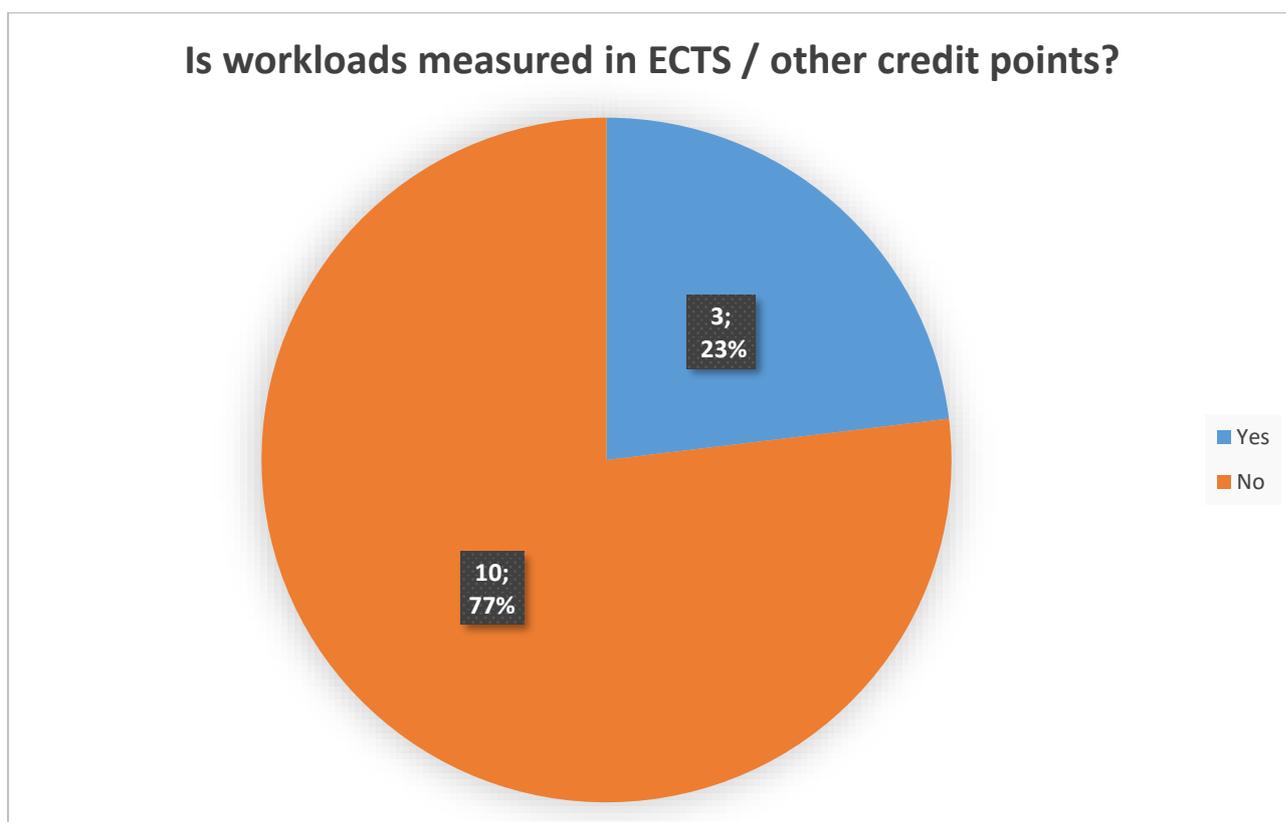
It should be noted that 11 respondents from 13 answered this question.

Over 54% of the HEIs responded that information on micro-credentials is provided only in national language. Among them 4 public HEIs, 1 non-public.

Over 27% of the cases the respondents declared availability of the information on micro-credentials in national language/-es and foreign language/-s . Such situation was mentioned by 3 HEIs, including 1 public and 2 non-public.

About 18% of HEI (which actually meant 2 public HEIs) declared that that information on micro-credentials is provided in national language/-s and foreign language for micro-credentials that available in foreign language/-s.

8. Is workloads measured in ECTS / other credit points?



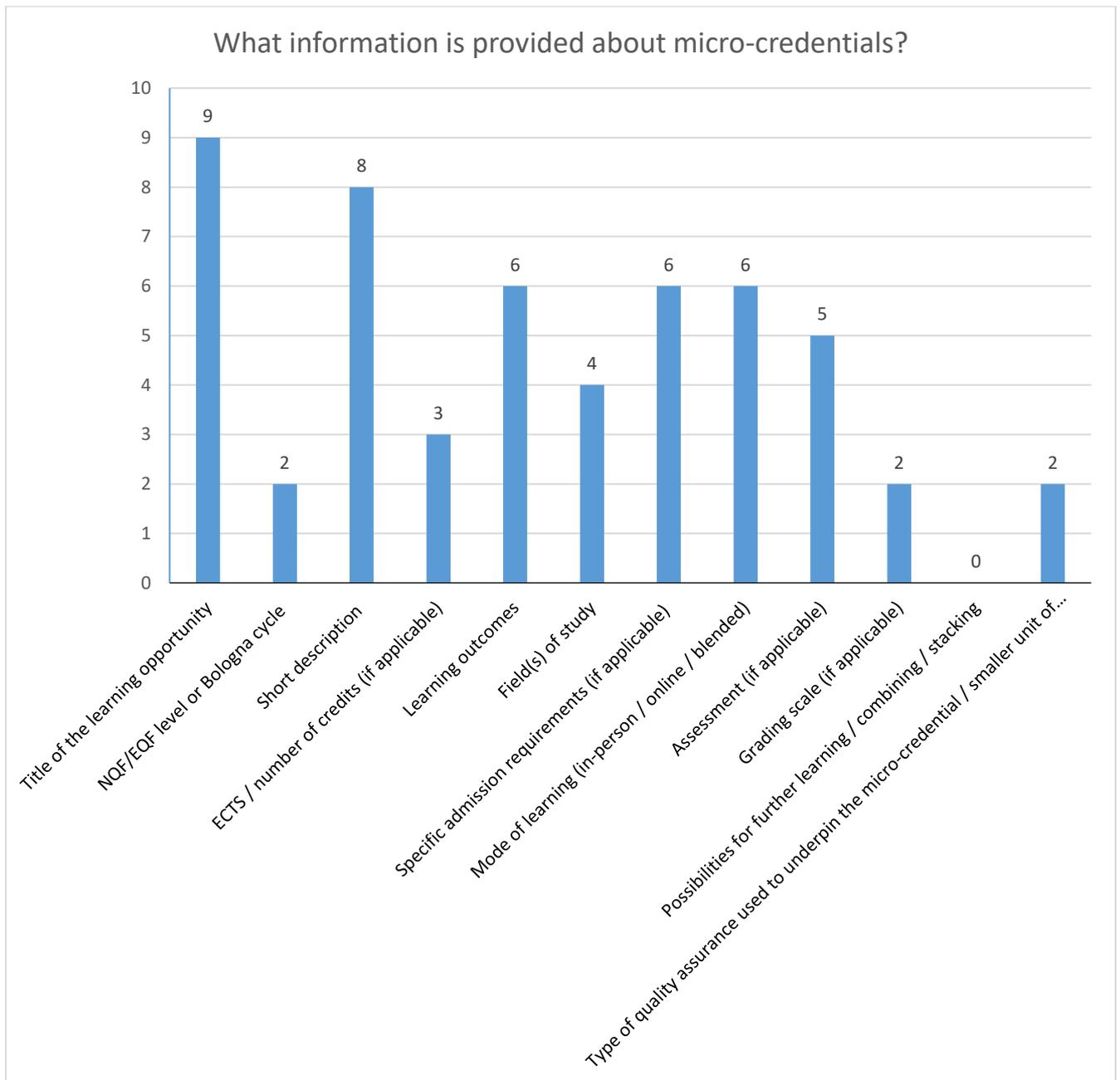
Responses	%	Number
Yes	28,57%	3
No	71,43%	10

Total number of responses: 13

The majority of the respondents (over 71 %) declared that micro-credential workloads are not measured in ECTS / other credit points. Among them 8 public and 2 non-public HEIs.

28,57% HEI (which actually meant 3 HEIs) marked the answer “Yes”. Only one of them mentioned that ECTS applies to all micro-credentials except for IACBE-accredited modules, for which only credits are applied.

9. What information is provided about micro-credentials (multiple answers)?



The top 2 information elements provided about micro-credentials are

- ***Title of the learning opportunity,***
- ***Short description***

9 HEIs responded that provide a ***Title of the learning opportunity,*** 8 respondents declare that publish a ***Short description*** of micro-credentials.

The next three positions that received the same number of responses (6 in each case) are:

- ***Learning outcome,***
- ***Specific admission requirements,***
- ***Mode of learning (in-person / online / blended).***

Such elements as **Assessment, Field(s) of study** and **ECTS / number of credits** were indicated by 5, 4, 3 HEIs respectively.

The last three positions are:

- **NQF/EQF level or Bologna cycle,**
- **Grading scale,**
- **Type of quality assurance used to underpin the micro-credential / smaller unit of learning.**

They received the same number of responses (2 in each case).

No one mentioned such element as **Possibilities for further learning / combining / stacking**

To sum up, 11 out of 12 abovementioned information elements are provided about micro-credentials. The most popular positions are **Title of the learning opportunity** and **Short description micro-credentials** that included by nearly 70% of the respondents.

It should be noted that 1 respondent didn't answer this question.

Chapter 2 – In depth case studies - interviews with HEIs

2.1 Methodology for case studies

2.1.1 Choice of the institutions

Aim of the interviews was to gain deeper insight into purpose and availability of micro-credentials in HEIs, as well as way how information on these learning opportunities are presented HEIs.

For this stage of survey have been chosen all institutions that declared to provide micro-credentials/small volume of learning.

Among them are:

- public and non-public;
- specialised in particular disciplines as well as those with broad educational offer;
- using different technical solutions to present information on their website;
- situated in different geographic areas of Poland;
- more advanced and less advanced in providing micro-credentials.

All HEIs selected for in-depth analysis completed the quantitative survey, which ensured a ground for understanding and basic insight into their situation. Any doubts or questions about interpretation of the survey questions could also give additional perspective on the analysis.

2.1.2 Procedure

Stage I – invitation for the interview

An invitation for the interview was sent to all 13 Polish HEIs, who selected reply “YES” on the question “Does your institution provide micro-credentials/small volume of learning” in the questionnaire.

The HEIs were also provided with detailed questions to be better prepare for the interview:

1. What type of leaning opportunities can be considered a micro-credential in organisation you represent?
2. In your opinion, what is the purpose of micro-credentials from the perspective of learners?
3. Do you know why this type of learning opportunities were included in your institution’s curriculum? (Example: demand from students and/or labour market; demand from public; possibility to educate wider audience on topical issues; profit; other...)
4. In your opinion – is information on these learning opportunities sufficiently represented and explained on institution’s webpage?
5. If so, is the information on micro-credentials included in the study programme catalogues available online?
6. Does description provide information on recognition / stackability of micro-credentials? In your opinion/ experience – is this information understood by people involved in this type of education experience?
7. Is the stackability available in practice and is it available across institutions?

The decision was made to conduct the interview in the national language. The motivation for the decision was to make it easier for the HEIs to understand all questions and receive the most detailed answers.

Actually 3 (three) HEIs out of 11 invited agreed to take part in the interviews, which NAWA - the Polish ENIC-NARIC - considers a good result.

Stage II – online interview with the HEIs

HEIs representatives had a chance to review the questions and preliminary prepare for the meeting.

Each of the three meetings (one per HEI) was conducted online and lasted about 0,5 - 1 hour. It was attended by 4 from 5 representatives of the NAWA (Hanna Reczulska, Joanna Nyga, Nataliia Chuiko, Klaudia Michniok and Monika Krysik).

The HEI representatives were informed about the aims of the project in general and the research conducted.

During the interviews, NAWA analysts assisted with the interpretation of some terminology used in interview questions, such as “micro-credentials” and “stackability of micro-credentials”.

The HEI representatives were also encouraged to ask or comment on any aspect of the micro-credential research (both quantitative survey and qualitative part).

2.2 Case study A – a public HEI with broad education offer: University of Bielsko-Biala

2.2.1. About the HEI

The University of Bielsko-Biala (Akademia Techniczno-Humanistyczna w Bielsku-Bialej) was founded in October 2001 as an independent governmental academic institution. Previously, since 1969, it had been a branch of the Technical University of Lodz (Politechnika Łódzka). The machine-design, electrical, and textile industries have an established history in the region, so the main study fields have been long established. However, due to changes in the economy, other fields of study have been developed, including management, humanities, environmental sciences and computer sciences.

At present, about 5,000 students study at five faculties: Faculty of Mechanical Engineering and Computer Science; Faculty of Materials, Civil and Environmental Engineering; Faculty of Management and Transport; Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, and Faculty of Health Sciences. The University employs about 400 people, including 200 experienced professors and other academic staff.

The University cooperates with many academic centres and research institutes all over the world. The number of bilateral agreements is growing exponentially each year – up to now, it has signed over 100 agreements in the Erasmus+ programme. Also the University has signed approximately 50 bilateral agreements covering scientific and educational cooperation with foreign partners.

2.2.2. Interview results with HEI

1. What type of leaning opportunities can be considered a micro-credential in organisation you represent?

Last week, a meeting was held on the subject of micro-credential with the Erasmus Programme coordinator and persons responsible for setting the principles of education.

As agreed, diplomas and certificates, both Polish and foreign, which confirm the improvement of competences, e.g. language, can be recognized. The HEI itself organizes language courses for Polish and foreign staff and students, and issued certificates always include information on learning outcomes. Certificates issued to foreigners undertaking education, e.g. as part of the Erasmus programme, confirm

not only the education process conducted, but also the scope of competences acquired. Moreover, prior to commencement of the learning process, students have access to abbreviated syllabuses, prepared in English, in which learning outcomes, acquired ECTS credits, form of learning, acquired competences, etc. are described in detail.

The effects of micro-credentials appear in issued certificates - e.g. foreign students who took part in the education process by undertaking part of the educational cycle at our academy.

Graduates of short-term mobility receive a document - Section to be compiled after the mobility - which is a part evaluating the education process at the academy. Certificates and Europass are issued for graduates of internships, confirming the range of acquired competences. All subjects offered within the learning cycles contain complementary elements - syllabuses, which contain the learning outcomes, are translated into English, prepared by the lecturers, and include a detailed description of the learning outcomes, conditions for completing the course, ECTS credits, the form of the course, and what competences a given participant has acquired after completing the course.

2. In your opinion, what is the purpose of micro-credentials from the perspective of learners?

In the area of short learning cycles, e.g. specialised courses undertaken by students and graduates, the main task is to confirm the skills and competences acquired.

The certificates issued must indicate which specific competences have been acquired and how these competences relate to the overall learning experience of the course.

They also fit in with the idea of BIP - Blended Intensive Programmes - which allow participation in short intensive learning cycles and correspond to the main course of study.

3. Do you know why this type of learning opportunities were included in your institution's curriculum? (Example: demand from students and/or labour market; demand from public; possibility to educate wider audience on topical issues; profit; other...)

The requirements of the labour market and the interest in increasing professional competence are forcing changes and the introduction of short, intensive learning cycles that help to improve the qualifications for a position without having to undertake a full course of study in this area. Professional competence is a key element when applying for a job - not just a diploma confirming a completed degree, so everything is moving towards certification not only of formal education but also of less formal education offered by various institutions.

4. In your opinion – is information on these learning opportunities sufficiently represented and explained on institution's webpage?

The following are available on the website in Polish and English: catalogues, syllabuses with the scope of topics and the range of competences acquired after completing a course of study. The website for international students is currently being modernised.

There is no information about micro-credentials in the European nomenclature yet. An update is planned for July/August.

5. If so, is the information on micro-credentials included in the study programme catalogues available online?

Not applicable

6. Does description provide information on recognition / stackability of micro-credentials? In your opinion/ experience – is this information understood by people involved in this type of education experience?

No, such information is not included in any of the listed places and documents. This information is being developed and requires approval by the academy authorities and faculties.

7. Is the stackability available in practice and is it available across institutions?

In the longer term, yes - the realistic timeframe for the introduction of micro-credentials is the academic year 2023/2024. The academia is in the phase of transformation into a university, which requires many changes. Preparations for the partial introduction of micro-credentials are planned over the coming year.

2.3 Case study B – a public HEI specialised in engineering, public safety and medicine: Hipolit Cegielski Academy of Applied Sciences in Gniezno

2.3.1. About the HEI

The Academy of Applied Sciences in Gniezno (Akademia Nauk Stosowanych im. Hipolita Cegielskiego w Gnieźnie) was founded in 2004. From 1 May 2022, the State High School in Gniezno changed its name to the Hipolit Cegielski Academy of Applied Sciences in Gniezno.

The Academy of Applied Sciences in Gniezno provides education in engineering studies, bachelor's studies and master's studies. Currently, the HEI's educational offer includes engineering, public safety and medical faculties.

Students are given the opportunity to participate in various educational programmes, led by the Erasmus+ programme. The Academy implements the POWER programme (Program Operacyjny Wiedza Edukacja Rozwój) - Operational Programme Knowledge Education Development, which enables the granting of additional financial support for the mobility abroad of students with disabilities and those in a difficult financial situation, accepted for mobility within the Erasmus+ programme.

2.3.2. Interview results with HEI

1. What type of learning opportunities can be considered a micro-credential in organisation you represent?

Micro-credentials are all additional training and courses leading to a certificate through which the provider verifies and validates the learning outcomes. A micro-credentials can be issued once it has been verified that the expected learning outcomes have been achieved, i.e. that the student has reached the required level of proficiency and successfully completed the training.

2. In your opinion, what is the purpose of micro-credentials from the perspective of learners?

Gaining additional skills, qualifications and competences that are not included in the study program. This enables students to achieve extra-curricular learning outcomes.

3. Do you know why this type of learning opportunities were included in your institution's curriculum? (Example: demand from students and/or labour market; demand from public; possibility to educate wider audience on topical issues; profit; other...)

- student interest,
- lecturers' knowledge of what can be offered to students,

- keeping up to date with current trends at a given time.

4. In your opinion – is information on these learning opportunities sufficiently represented and explained on institution’s webpage?

Information about courses already taken is only posted on the akademy website. The HEI does not inform in advance about upcoming courses. There are no pre-defined programmes, so it is usually a description of an event that has taken place, with no details of the programme or information that any micro-credentials has been obtained.

5. If so, is the information on micro-credentials included in the study programme catalogues available online?

Not applicable

6. Does description provide information on recognition / stackability of micro-credentials? In your opinion/ experience – is this information understood by people involved in this type of education experience?

There is no such information.

7. Is the stackability available in practice and is it available across institutions?

At the moment, this is not possible.

2.4 Case study C – a public HEI with broad education offer: Krakow University of Economics

2.4.1. About the HEI

The Krakow University of Economics (Uniwersytet Ekonomiczny w Krakowie) is a modern university with traditions dating back to 1925. It conducts extensive scientific research and is currently educating 15 000 students.

The University is one of the largest centers for economic research and sciences in Poland. Its students acquire their knowledge in three organizational units: College of Economics, Finance and Law, College of Economics and Public Administration and College of Management and Quality Sciences. Currently, the University offers programs in 30 fields of study in Polish and English, including postgraduate studies and prestigious MBA studies.

Quality assurance is implemented by international accreditations (Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), European Association for Public Administration Accreditation (EAPAA), European Programme Accreditation System (EPAS) – Cracow Business School, International Coach Federation – postgraduate studies „Academy of coaching”).

The HEI developed cooperation with academic and business partners both in Poland and abroad. The University is a member in Network of International Business and Economic Schools (NIBES), the European University Association (EUA), European Business Consortium (EBC), University Network of the European Capitals of Culture (UNECC), Central European Exchange Program for University Studies (CEEPUS), Erasmus Network of Business Schools (ENBS), International Relation Office`s Forum (IRO`s Forum).

Krakow University of Economics is the biggest and organizationally most complex of the three Polish higher education institutions that took part in the case studies.

2.4.2. Interview results with HEI

1. What type of learning opportunities can be considered a micro-credential in organisation you represent?

The various forms of learning offered within the current study programmes and additional free activities, e.g. participation in business academies, learning support courses, one-off guest lectures, can be regarded as micro-credential. On the basis of their participation in these projects, students receive certification of the learning electives they have completed in the course of the meeting. These are certificates or diplomas issued as part of the completed course, training, etc., showing which learning outcomes have been realised.

If the certificates relate to learning outcomes that the student is obliged to achieve, then such certificate can be one of the elements of a passed course, but only if there is a correspondence of the learning outcomes. The given training must coincide with the card of the given course.

The university was the first university in Poland to join the European Banking Certificate Programme, obtaining PBA (Polish Bank Association) certification for the examinations. This means that the recognition of micro-credentials can also work in the reverse direction. Students graduating from one of the specialisations (banking and risk management) on the basis of passing the university level outcomes can obtain an exemption from two modules within the ECB.

It is also possible to be exempted from the examination of given course at the university if the student has validated learning outcomes by obtaining an international certificate.

2. In your opinion, what is the purpose of micro-credentials from the perspective of learners?

This is a concrete pass in the labour market confirming the acquisition of skills, competences and knowledge. It is also an argument on the labour market for acquiring additional skills. Micro-credentials confirm self-development and make it possible to organise this development by indicating what a person has and has not achieved and what knowledge has been acquired. The student systematises what he/ she knows and what he/she does not yet know and determines what to complete in the future and what to develop in order to be a good employee but also to develop oneself as a person.

3. Do you know why this type of learning opportunities were included in your institution's curriculum? (Example: demand from students and/or labour market; demand from public; possibility to educate wider audience on topical issues; profit; other...)

Most of the programmes that are in place are non-commercial programmes that have been created due to the needs and additional interests of students. The aim of some projects, such as the Santander Universidades agreement, is to fill the knowledge gap for people who are not always involved in the financial field on a daily basis. There are not just people who need to supplement their knowledge at university but also want to further develop their skills.

4. In your opinion – is information on these learning opportunities sufficiently represented and explained on institution's webpage?

Yes - information is posted on the website and social media of the university, as well as the website of the provider. This is information about the thematic scope, the content implemented, the learning outcomes and the fact that it is a project leading to a certificate (provided the learning outcomes are achieved).

However, these projects are generally implemented at short notice, so it is not possible to include them in the long-term study programme, which is prepared and published before the start of the study cycle. There is also no information about the possibility of counting micro-credentials towards the study programme. Such an action would require all the details to be agreed in advance, and often due to time, staff or infrastructure constraints this is not possible.

5. If so, is the information on micro-credentials included in the study programme catalogues available online?

Information is not available

6. Does description provide information on recognition / stackability of micro-credentials? In your opinion/ experience – is this information understood by people involved in this type of education experience?

Recognition for certain certificates can be applied in cases where the attainment of a certificate will affect the ability to validate the achievement of specific learning outcomes and the scope of the examination. Due to the fact that learning outcomes are confirmed at the university level, it is also possible for them to be recognised by other institutions at the national level and beyond. The learning outcomes confirmed at the university can be used in external institutions and, once some required outcomes have been achieved, external commissions can count them towards a professional qualification. For example, a certificate of passing specific exams at the university exempts you from exams for a statutory auditor.

7. Is the stackability available in practice and is it available across institutions?

Partially yes. If the completion of learning outcomes from several areas is required to achieve credit for a module, and each of these areas is completed by obtaining a certificate, it is possible to confirm the outcomes together. On the basis of these individual credits it is possible to pass the whole course or module. Some institutions will recognise a given sequence of events, lectures or projects, and will recognise them together as a single major credit.

Conclusions

The majority of Polish HEIs are not familiar with “micro-credentials / small volume of learning”, and as a result, only a small number of them passed a questionnaire (only 60 out of 350, that makes 17% response rate) and only 13 out of 60 respondents declared that they offer this learning opportunity.

Micro-credentials as well as a stackability of micro-credentials are not covered by the Polish legislation regarding higher education and science. Consequently, Polish HEIs that offer micro-credentials have different understandings of this terminology and provide them in different ways. The majority of the HEIs responded that understand micro-credentials as standalone units of learning that are not part of a study programme. During the interviews NAWA analysts assisted HEIs with the interpretation “micro-credentials” and “stackability of micro-credentials” according to Council Recommendation of 16 June 2022.

All interviewed HEIs declared that the purpose of micro-credentials from the perspective of learners is to acquire additional skills, qualifications and competences that are not included in the study program. This learning opportunity enables students to achieve extra-curricular learning outcomes.

The majority of the respondents declared that micro-credential workloads are not measured in ECTS / other credit points. However, only one HEI responded that ECTS applies to all micro-credentials except for IACBE (International Accreditation Council For Business Education) accredited modules, for which only credits are applied.

Polish HEIs that provide micro-credentials don't inform in advance about this learning opportunity. The information is normally published on institutions webpages in short notice. It's usually a description of an event that has taken place, with no details of the programme or information that any micro-credentials has been obtained. Most of the HEIs responded that information on micro-credentials is provided only in national language. The top two information elements provided about micro-credentials are the title of the learning opportunity and its short description.

The majority of the respondents declared that stackability of micro-credentials isn't available in practice and, accordingly, no information regarding stackability is provided. Only one interviewed HEI answered that a stackability is available partially. If the completion of learning outcomes from several areas is required to achieve credit for a module, and each of these areas is completed by obtaining a certificate, it is possible to confirm the outcomes together. On the basis of these individual credits it is possible to pass the whole course or module.

Recommendations for national level improvements

The following recommendations may be considered, based on the research from the OCTRA 2 project:

- 1) A general recommendation at the state level to review the existing national provisions on information requirements applicable to HEIs, to ensure availability of information about micro-credentials for different groups of recipients.
Such a review needs to be done in cooperation with HEIs and should take into account not only the content but also the form of presentation.
Moreover, it should focus rather on the organization and completeness of information than adding new information requirements without improving those already in force.
- 2) Placing the information about micro-credentials alongside educational offers on the HEIs websites. Such information should contain the following elements: title, short description, NQF/EQF level or Bologna cycle, learning outcomes, mode of learning, field of study, possibilities for further learning / combining / stacking, type of quality assurance used to underpin the micro-credential / smaller unit of learning, as well as ECTS / number of credits, specific admission requirements, assessment, grading scale (if they are applicable).
- 3) Considering presentation of micro-credentials as a separate entity/tab within the HEI website, with entrance link easy to find for users both from the main website and in the menu.
- 4) Information on micro-credentials should be accessible to general public, not only to registered students/staff.
- 5) Taking into account the limited resources and motivations shaping HEIs language policy, as well as modern possibilities of automatic translation, it is necessary to consider the scope of the key content to be provided in a popular foreign language.
- 6) Considering the structures of information offered in national and foreign language(s) – the same structure and labels helps in efficient navigation and content search even if certain part of information is only available in national language. Promote linking between the same elements of content offered in Polish and English version of the website.
- 7) Considering availability of information on micro-credentials from earlier years (cost of storage, update vs. usefulness for different groups of recipients).

Annexes

Annex I - HEIs survey

Survey

This survey is conducted as part of case studies within ERASMUS+ project “*Online course catalogues and databases for transparency and recognition 2*” (OCTRA 2), which objective is to promote a dialogue between credential evaluators at ENICs and NARICs and HEIs by agreeing on a template for the structure of course catalogues, including smaller learning units (i.e. micro-credentials) that would guide to structured and transparent descriptions of HE qualifications.

According to Council Recommendation of 16 June 2022 on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability 2022/C 243/02:

“‘Micro-credential’ means the record of the learning outcomes that a learner has acquired following a small volume of learning. These learning outcomes will have been assessed against transparent and clearly defined criteria. Learning experiences 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 stand-alone or combined into larger credentials. They are underpinned by quality assurance following agreed standards in the relevant sector or area of activity.”

Survey should take up to 10 minutes to complete. The questionnaire is anonymous, and names of HEIs are collected only for the internal management of the survey.

Name of the organisations _____

1. Does your institution provide micro-credentials/small volume of learning?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No (if “no” all further questions do not apply)

2. Are these micro-credentials/smaller volumes of learning:
 - a. Standalone units of learning that are not part of a study programme
 - b. Part of study programme (courses, part of the courses etc.)
 - c. Both
 - d. Other _____

3. Is the information of these learning opportunities available on your institution’s website?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

3. If information is available on outside information sources, does institutions webpage provide information on these learning opportunities?
 - a. Yes, full description and options
 - b. Yes, with short description and links
 - c. Yes, as links

d. No

4. If information is available on other information sources, please list them:

5. Does institution's website provide information on:

- a. Recognition of micro-credentials/ small volume of learning
- b. Stacking of micro-credentials/ small volume of learning
- c. Combining micro-credentials/ small volume of learning
- d. No information on recognition / stackability / combining micro-credentials is provided.

6. Is information on micro-credentials provided:

- a. Only national language/-es
- b. On all micro-credentials in national language/-es and foreign language/-s
- c. In national language/-s and foreign language for micro-credentials that available in foreign language/-s

7. Is workloads measured in ECTS / other credit points?

- a. Yes (specify if other credits ____)
- b. No

8. What information is provided about micro-credentials? Several options possible.

- a. Title of the learning opportunity
- b. NQF/EQF level or Bologna cycle
- c. Short description
- d. ECTS / number of credits (if applicable)
- e. Learning outcomes
- f. Field(s) of study
- g. Specific admission requirements (if applicable)
- h. Mode of learning (in-person / online / blended)
- i. Assessment (if applicable)
- j. Grading scale (if applicable)
- k. Possibilities for further learning / combining / stacking
- l. Type of quality assurance used to underpin the micro-credential / smaller unit of learning.

Thank You for completing the survey!

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Structure of the interviews with HEIs

1. What type of learning opportunities can be considered a micro-credential in organisation you represent?
2. In your opinion, what is the purpose of micro-credentials from the perspective of learners?
3. Do you know why this type of learning opportunities were included in your institution's curriculum? (Example: demand from students and/or labour market; demand from public; possibility to educate wider audience on topical issues; profit; other...)
4. In your opinion – is information on these learning opportunities sufficiently represented and explained on institution's webpage?
5. If so, is the information on micro-credentials included in the study programme catalogues available online?
6. Does description provide information on recognition / stackability of micro-credentials? In your opinion/ experience – is this information understood by people involved in this type of education experience?
7. Is the stackability available in practice and is it available across institutions?

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