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ANNEX 2

ANNEX

to the

Proposal for a Council Recommendation

on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability

{SWD(2021) 367 final}

ANNEX II

Union principles for the design and issuance of micro-credentials

The 10 principles presented below specify the nature of micro-credentials and offer guidance to Member States, public authorities and providers on the design and issuance of micro-credentials and systems for micro-credentials. The principles highlight the key characteristics of the European approach to micro-credentials that can enable the trust and quality of micro-credentials. The principles are universal and may be applied in any area or sector.

1	Quality	Micro-credentials are subject to internal and external quality assurance by the system producing them (e.g. the education, training or labour market context in which the micro-credential is developed and delivered). Quality assurance processes must be fit-for-purpose, be clearly documented and accessible and meet the needs and expectations of learners and stakeholders. Providers: External quality assurance is based primarily on the assessment of providers (rather than individual courses) and the effectiveness of their internal quality assurance procedures. Providers should make sure that internal quality assurance covers all the following elements: • the overall quality of the micro-credential itself, based on the standards referred to below • the quality of the course, where applicable, leading to the micro-credential • learners' feedback on the learning experience leading to the micro-credential; and • peers feedback, including other providers and stakeholders, on the learning experience leading to the micro-credential Standards: External quality assurance is conducted in line with: • Annex IV of the European qualifications framework Recommendation, where applicable; • the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, where applicable;
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		- the European quality assurance reference framework (the EQAVET Framework) in the field of vocational education and training, where applicable; - other quality assurance instruments, including registries and labels, to build public trust in micro-credentials, where applicable.
2	Transparency	Micro-credentials are measurable, comparable and understandable with clear information on learning outcomes, workload, content, level, and the learning offer, as relevant. Workload - Higher education institutions should use the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and comply with the principles in Annex V to the EQF Recommendation, wherever possible, to demonstrate the notional workload needed to achieve the learning outcomes of the micro-credential. - Providers that do not use the ECTS may use other systems or types of information that can effectively describe learning outcomes and workload, in compliance with the principles in Annex V to the EQF Recommendation. Qualifications framework/systems - Micro-credentials may be included in national qualifications frameworks/systems, where relevant and in line with national priorities and decisions. National qualifications frameworks/systems are referenced to the European qualifications framework and, for higher education qualifications, self-certified to the qualifications framework of the European Higher Education Area, which can further support the transparency, and trust in, micro-credentials. Information on the offer of micro-credentials Systems for micro-credentials should provide transparent and clear information, to underpin guidance systems for learners, in line with

		national practices and stakeholders needs: • Information on providers of micro-credentials should be published in registers, or incorporated into existing registers. Higher-education providers (and other relevant providers) should be included, where possible, in the Database of External Quality Assurance Results (DEQAR), based on quality assurance in line with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG); • Information on learning opportunities leading to micro-credentials should be accessible and easily exchanged through relevant platforms, including Europass.
3	Relevance	Micro-credentials should be designed as distinct, targeted learning achievements and learning opportunities leading to them are updated as necessary, to meet identified learning needs. Collaboration between education and training organisations, employers, social partners, other providers and users of micro-credentials is encouraged to increase the relevance of the micro-credentials for the labour market.
4	Valid assessment	Micro-credential learning outcomes are assessed against transparent standards.
5	Learning Pathways	Micro-credentials are designed to support flexible learning pathways, including the possibility to ‘stack’, validate and recognise micro-credentials from across different systems. Stackability Micro-credentials are designed to be modular so that other micro-credentials may be added to create larger credentials. 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. Validation of non-formal and informal learning Obtaining micro-credentials is possible following assessment of

		learning outcomes, obtained either through a specific course leading to a micro-credential, or on the basis of assessment of learning outcomes resulting from non-formal and informal learning.
6	Recognition	Recognition has a clear signalling value of learning outcomes for smaller modules of learning and paves the way for a wider offer of such learning experiences in a comparable way across the EU. Micro-credentials are recognised for academic or employment purposes based on standard recognition procedures used in recognising foreign qualifications and learning periods abroad, when dealing with micro-credentials issued by formal education providers.
7	Portable	Micro-credentials are owned by the credential-holder (the learner) and may be stored and shared easily by the credential-holder, including through secure digital wallets (e.g Europass), in line with the General Data Protection Regulation. The infrastructure for storing data is based on open standards and data models, This ensures interoperability and seamless exchange of data, and allows for smooth checks of data authenticity.
8	Learner centred	Micro-credentials are designed to meet the needs of the target group of learners. Learners are involved in the internal and external quality assurance processes and their feedback is taken into account as part of the continuous improvement of the micro-credential.
9	Authentic	Micro-credentials contain sufficient information to check the identity of the credential-holder (learner), the legal identity of the issuer, the date and location of issuance of the micro-credential.
10	Information and guidance	Information and advice on micro-credentials should be incorporated in lifelong learning guidance services and should reach the broadest possible learner groups, in an inclusive way, supporting education, training and career choices.