

Micro-credentials linked to the Bologna Key Commitments

EQAR General Assembly

13 April 2022



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Erasmus+ Programme
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Details project:

- Title: Micro-credentials linked to the Bologna Key Commitments
- Erasmus+ KA3: Initiatives to support the implementation of European Higher Education Area (EHEA) reforms, 2019
- Period: March 2020 – March 2022



Aim project:

- Raise awareness among national governments
- Encourage and guide national governments to include micro-credentials on the policy agenda
- Check whether existing Bologna tools are fit for micro-credentials and/or propose changes for adaptations on European level
- Formulate recommendations
- Create a European Framework for micro-credentials

MICROBOL survey:

- Aim of the survey: gain a picture on the state-of-play on micro-credentials in different member states of the European Higher Education Area and encouraging national discussion
 - Target: members of the Bologna Follow Up Group as well as the nominated representatives in the MICROBOL working groups
 - Respondents: 35 countries participated in the survey
 - Reference point in time
 - First time EHEA members were questioned
- => Way forward in common understanding

Contents

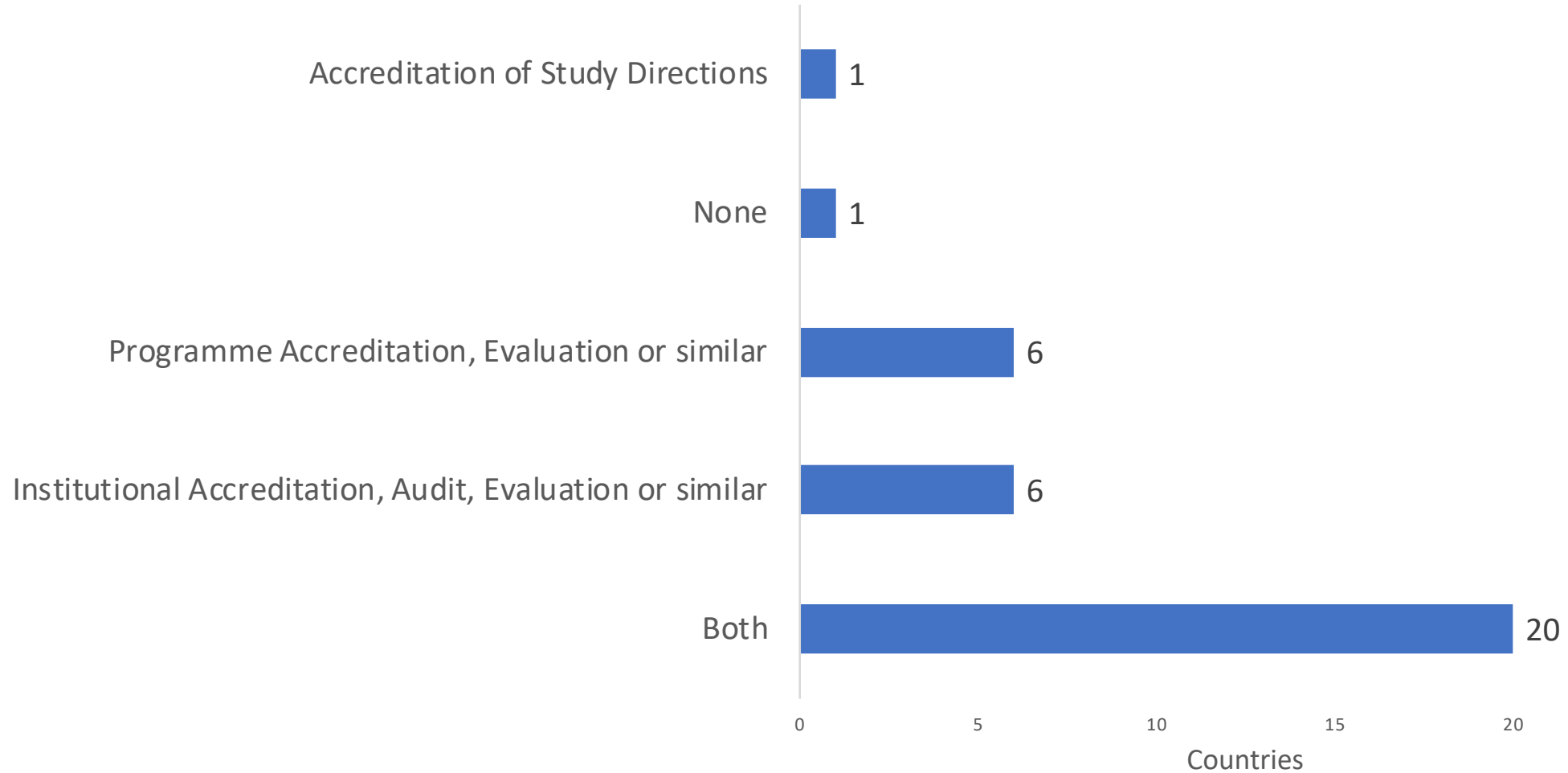
- Context of the study and data collection
- Section 1 - Investigating the use of micro-credentials
- Section 2 - Applying Bologna tools to micro-credentials: Quality Assurance
- Section 3 - Challenges regarding the application of Bologna tools to micro-credentials

Section 2

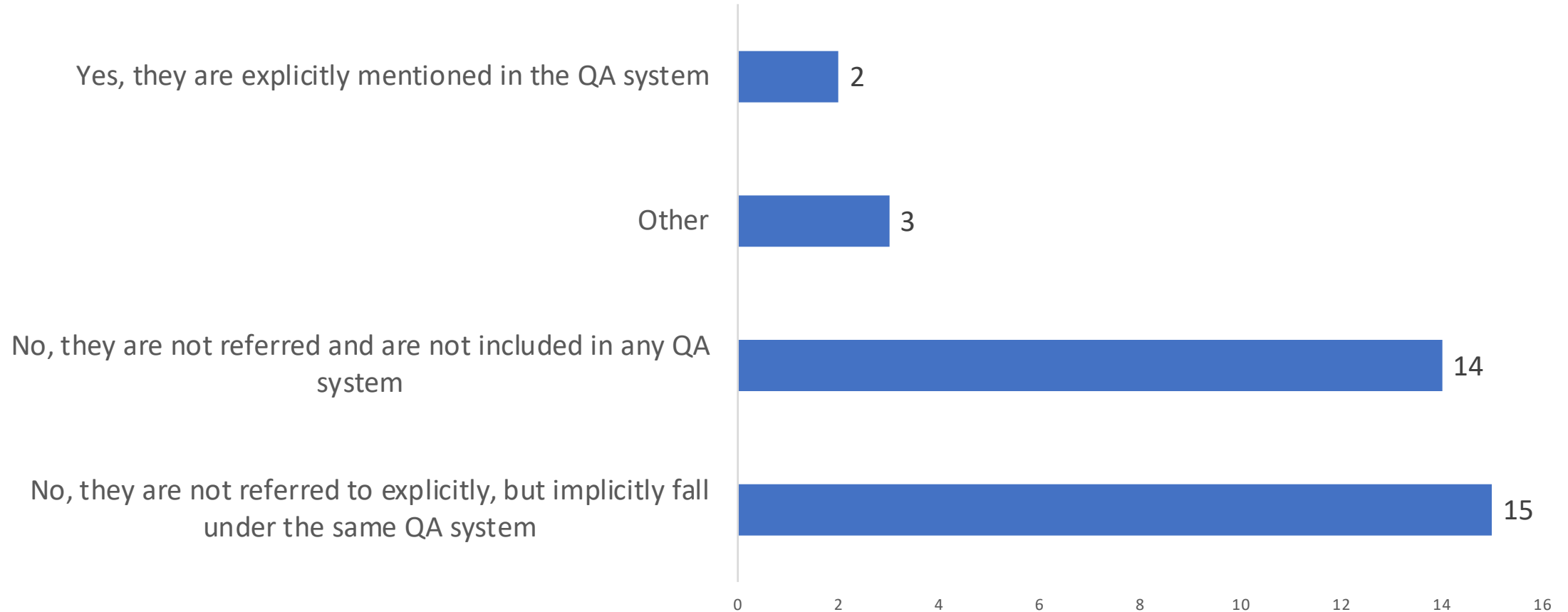
Applying Bologna tools to micro-credentials

- Quality Assurance
- Recognition
- Qualification Frameworks & ECTS

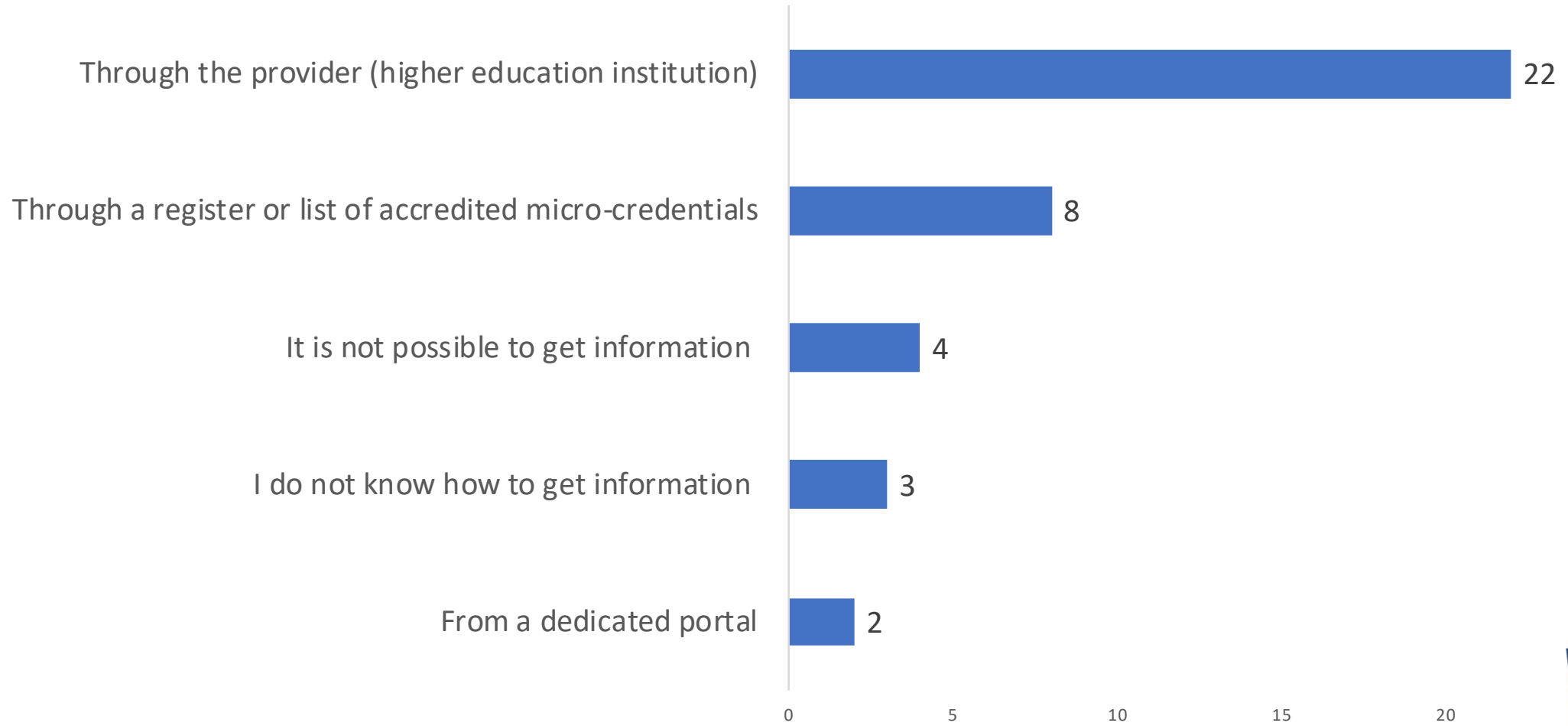
External quality assurance systems



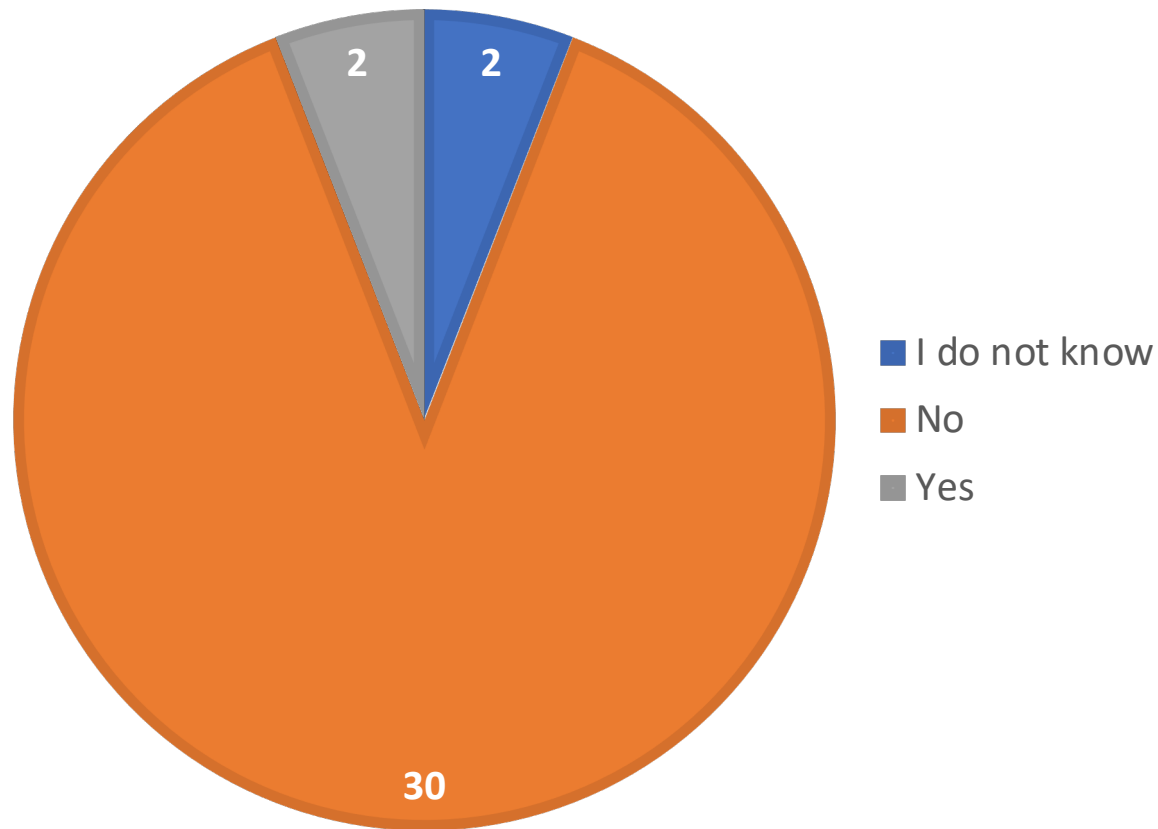
Micro-credentials included in the national QA



Sources of information on the QA status of the awarded credential



Other policies and/or practices related to the quality assurance of MCs

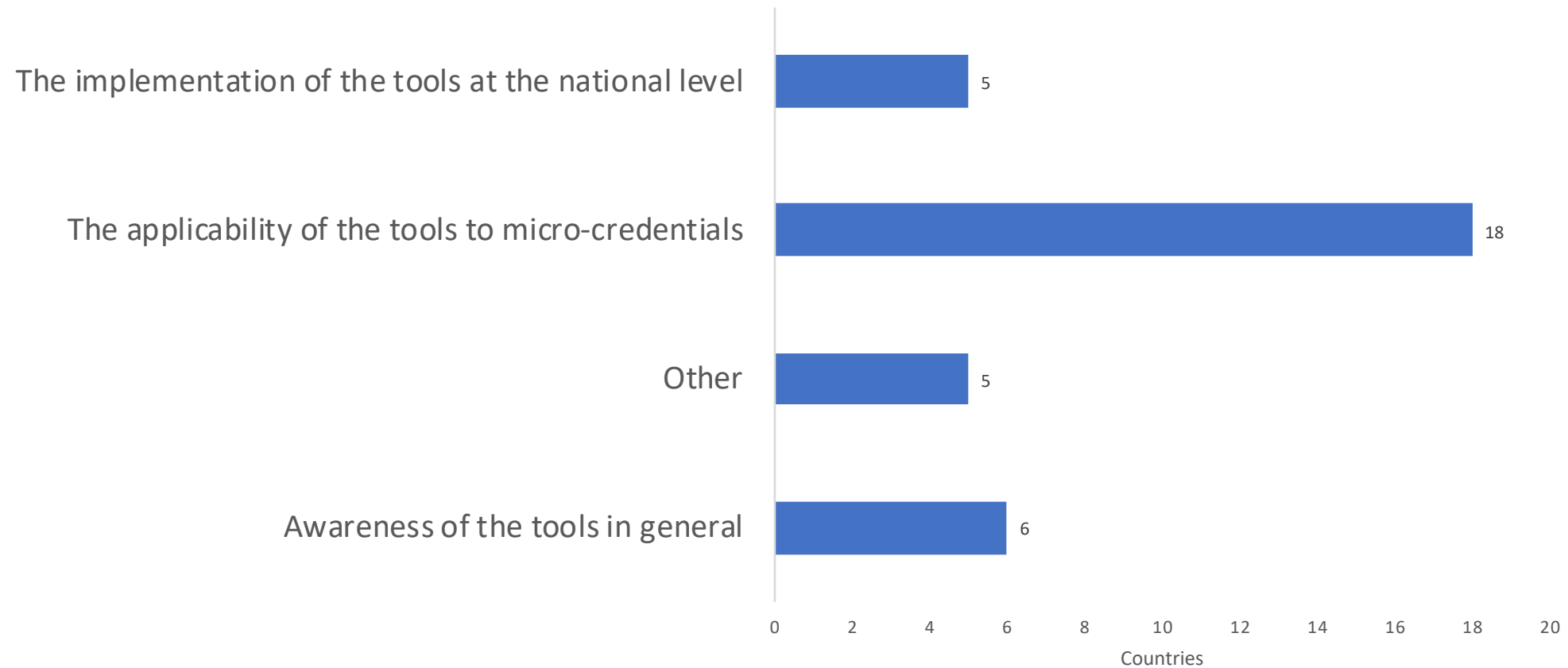


- **Not implemented:** 30 countries
- **Implemented:** 2 countries
 - VET subject to quality control
 - Specific regulations on the accreditation of lifelong learning programme

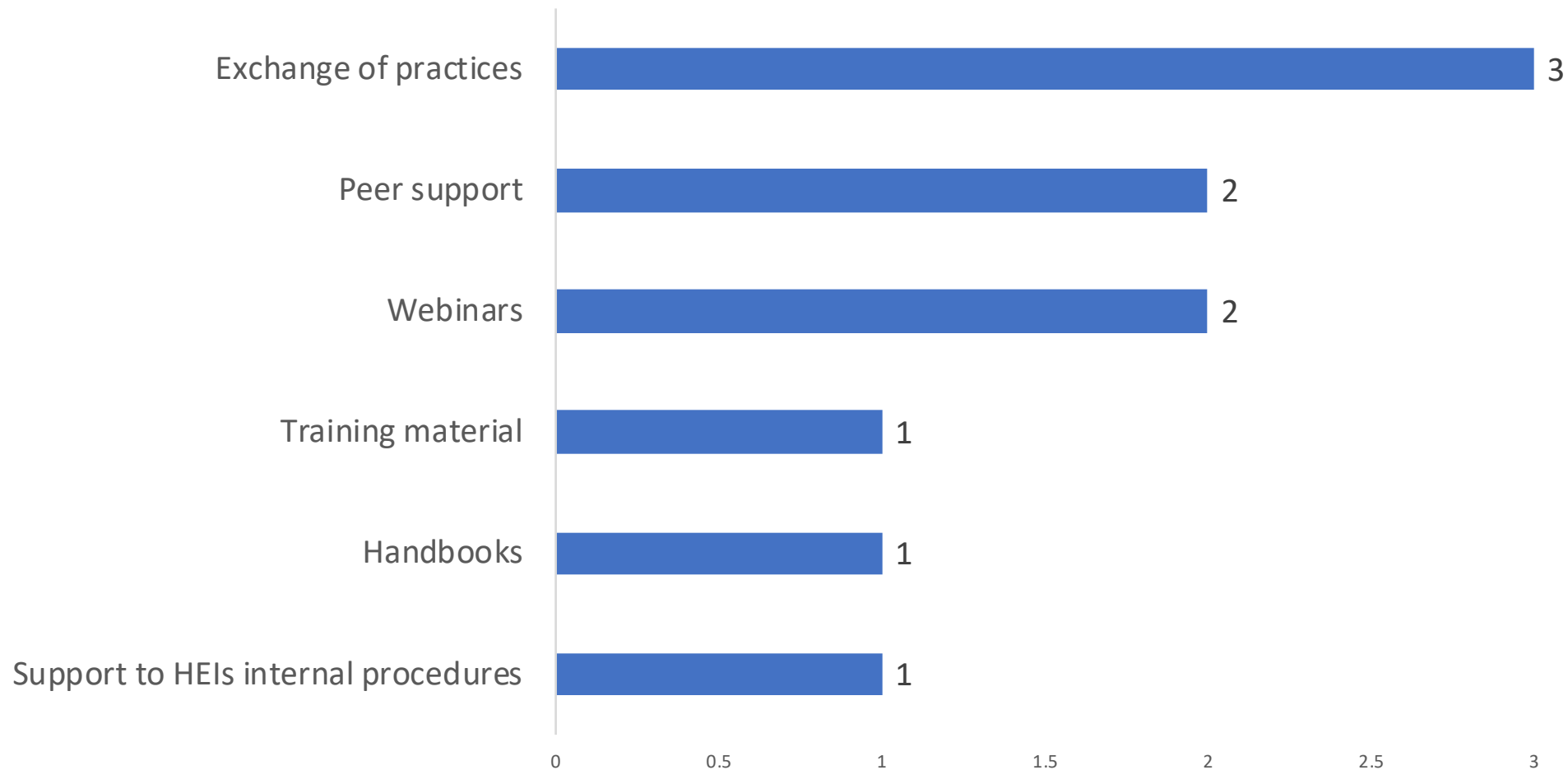
Section 3

Challenges regarding the application of Bologna tools to micro-credentials

Biggest challenges to apply Bologna Key Commitments to micro-credentials



Type of support required



MICROBOL recommendations (July21)

- Based on survey results & discussions in the working groups
- Joint publication of 34 recommendations on QA, recognition & QF & ECTS
- Target: EHEA countries and stakeholder organisations, but also European Commission -> Consultation
- Download: <https://microcredentials.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2021/07/MICROBOL-Recommendations-1.pdf>



MICROBOL recommendations

Transversal themes:

1. An opportunity to rethink higher education's role in lifelong learning
2. Awareness of and common agreement on what a micro-credential is
3. A common format
4. Legislation
5. Digitalisation

Peer exchange and support, involvement of all actors, guidelines

Bologna key commitments



MICROBOL framework (March22)

- Common definition
- Purpose
- Use
- Constitutive elements
- Bologna key commitments:
 - Quality assurance in line with the ESG
 - Recognition
 - Learning outcomes & ECTS
 - Qualifications framework level
- Assessment of learning outcomes/achievements



Common definition

A micro-credential is a certified small volume of learning.

Purpose

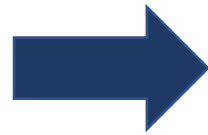
Micro-credentials are designed to provide the learner with specific knowledge, skills, and competences that respond to societal, personal, cultural or labour market needs.

- A way to increase and diversify lifelong learning provision to support individual learning pathways and widen access to higher education.
- They provide a timely and relevant response to learners' and labour market needs.
- Collaboration is an important aspect for the provision of micro-credentials.



Quality Assurance

The ESG



apply to all higher education offered in the EHEA, in whatever format, duration or mode of delivery

Internal quality assurance

- The primary responsibility for the quality of provision lies with the higher education institutions (ESG, 2015)
 - put in place quality assurance processes corresponding to the expectations laid down in Part 1 of the ESG
 - consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student “life cycle” (ESG standard 1.4)
- All micro-credentials should be subject to internal QA with well-built system to monitor their quality internally. Consider that stand-alone micro-credentials may require more elaborate QA procedures
- HEIs’ to publish clear policy and information on how they approach the quality of micro-credentials
- Include learners in all steps of the development, implementation and QA process of micro-credentials



External quality assurance

The role of the QA agencies is:

- to support higher education institutions in developing policies and processes for QA
- to ensure the public and stakeholders about the effectiveness of these
- to explicitly address internal QA of micro-credentials

The application of programme level evaluation procedures should not be encouraged for each micro-credential course

The institutional evaluation approach is better fit to cover also micro-credentials

Different types of micro-credentials might require different evaluation approaches
→ stand-alone micro-credential vs micro-credential that is part of a bigger degree programme; online mode vs the face-to-face



Legal aspects

- National governments should explore whether a change in legislation is needed, and if this is the case:
 - plan the relevant changes
 - exchange information with other countries
 - explore good practices and experiences at international
 - provide support to HEIs
 - and consider institutional autonomy to allow for diversity and creativity.
- Support the development of a clear policy framework with transparent standards, while at the same time supporting the increased development of micro-credentials in cocreation with all stakeholders.



Way forward

- Support the development of a shared vision of what a micro-credential is
- Design a set of "key considerations" for QA of micro-credentials. Further explore in collaboration with alternative providers if and how QA procedures should be adapted for the provision of micro-credentials in partnerships
- Further investigate employers' acceptance of micro-credentials
- Develop a guidebook including a set of guidelines, good practices and recommendations for HEIs
- Develop official registers of micro-credential providers at national/regional levels, or incorporate them into existing registers. Ensure the inclusion of micro-credential providers in DEQAR, based on quality assurance in line with the ESG



Way forward

- Promote the development of clear and transparent catalogues of existing micro-credentials, offered by registered providers
- Encourage digitally awarded and user-controlled credentials, as a means to support portability, transparency and reliability of information and verification of authenticity
- Explore if and how additional aspects need to be considered in the quality assurance of digitally-delivered micro-credentials
- Create opportunities for peer support and exchange of practices among stakeholders at national and international level



TPG C on QA: IMINQA-project

Title: Implementation and Innovation in QA through Peer Learning

Erasmus+ KA3: Initiatives to support the implementation of European Higher Education Area (EHEA) reforms, 2021

Period: May 2022 – May 2025

Partners: Belgium/Flemish Community, Romania, ENQA, EQAR
+ experts

TPG C on QA: IMINQA-project

Work package 5: QA of micro-credentials

- Establishment of a working group and working group meetings
- Desk research
- Guiding document for HEIs
- Guiding document for QA agencies
- Guidance and proposal for QA of MC at the provider level
- Inclusion of MC providers in DEQAR
- Feasibility assessment on quality label
- Harmonised data standard for information on micro-credentials
- Input to the 2024 Ministerial Conference

For more information on the
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