Micro-credentials in Flanders

Jan Dries
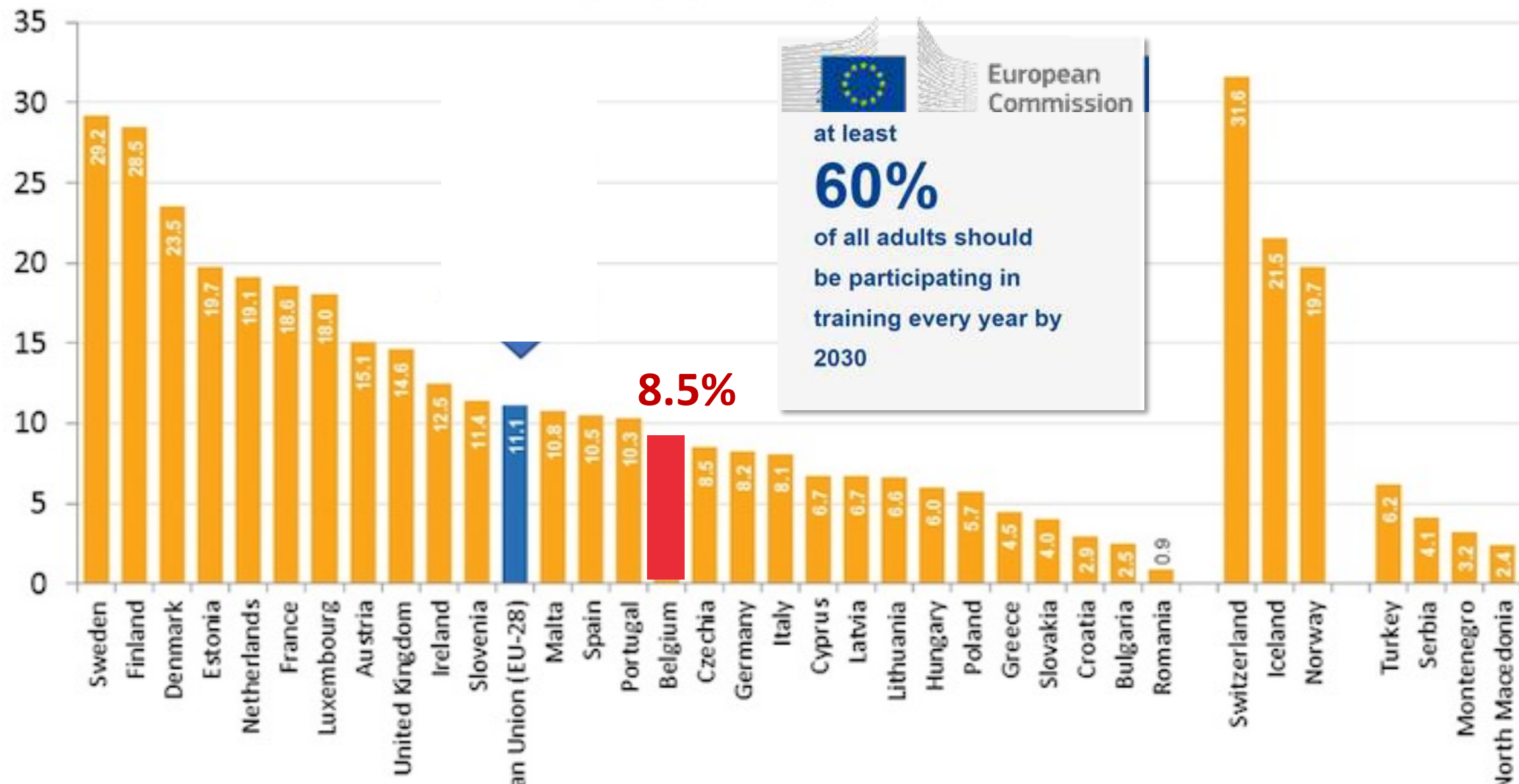
Lifelong learning

in Flanders

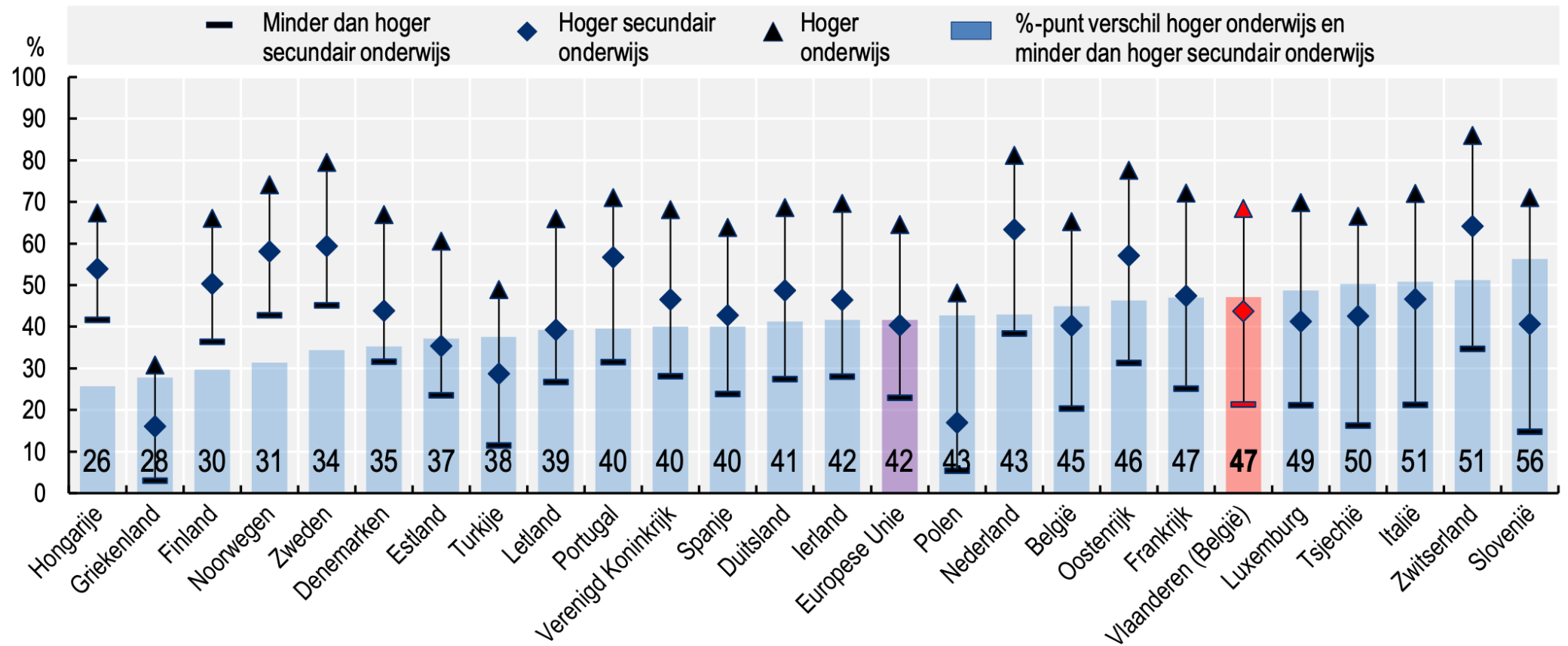**Challenge**

Adult participation in learning, 2018

(% of population aged 25-64)
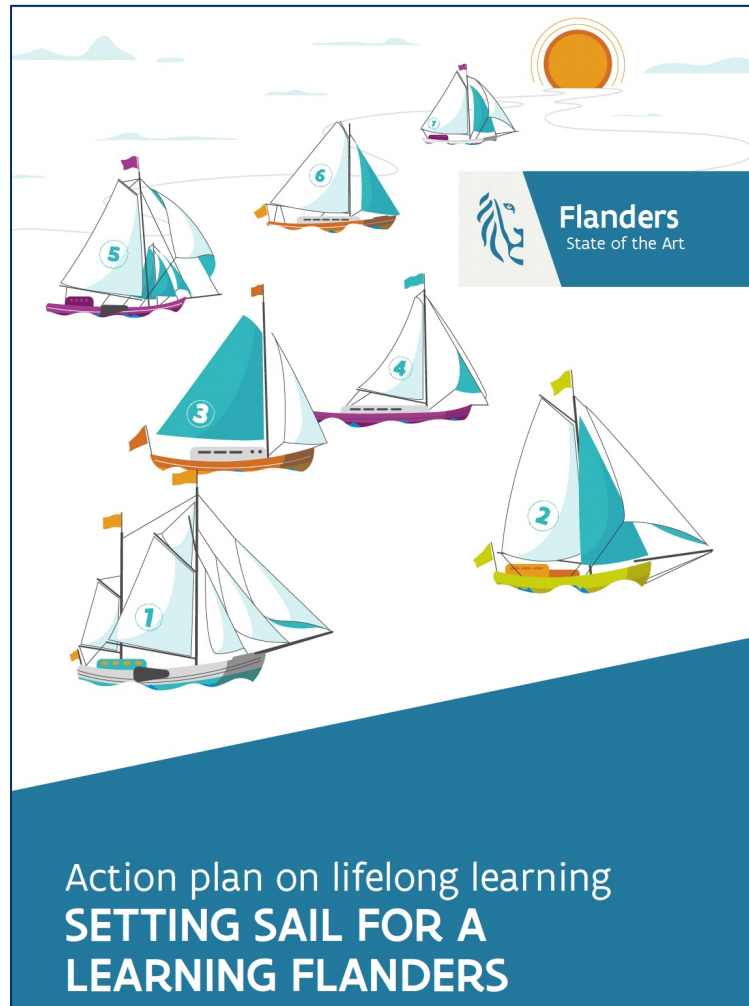
8.5%

at least **60%** of all adults should be participating in training every year by 2030

European Commission

Participation in LLL and education level

Big gap between higher and 'lower' educated

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Flanders action plan(s) on LLL

(Flanders government, dep. WSE, 2021)

Action plan on lifelong learning
SETTING SAIL FOR A
LEARNING FLANDERS

Competition on the LLL market in Flanders

Flanders: 5 universities + 15 university colleges

Alliance for LLL 1

www.nova-academy.be

- **UAntwerp**
- **UGhent**
- **VU Brussels**

(only academic offerings)

3 universities
14 campusses
30.000 staff
100.000 students

177 microcredentials

:Nova:Academy:

NL / EN   menu

Bringing learning to life

Academic platform for

Programmes

Lectures and study days

Nova Academy brings learning to (your) life. The University of Antwerpen, Ghent University and Vrije Universiteit Brussel are joining forces to offer an overview of their continuing education opportunities on this platform.

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GHENT UNIVERSITY

VUB VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT BRUSSEL

Alliance for LLL 2

www.continue.be

- **KU Leuven**
- **+ associates**

(only in Dutch)

(academic + applied)

1 university
5 university colleges
23 campuses
22.000 staff
113.000 students

microcredentials 67

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Nova Academy

- Close collaboration in LLL
- Joint marketing & communication

- Framework for QA in LLL
- Pioneer on micro-credentials

- Framework for mc's is the basis for the Flemish framework

:Nova:Academy:

Home / Micro-credentials

Micro-credentials

With the growing need for lifelong learning, new forms of continuing education are starting to emerge. In addition to postgraduate programmes, lectures and study days, micro-credentials are perhaps the best answer to this increasing need.

> See all micro-credentials

Frequently asked questions

What is a micro-credential?

What is the difference with bachelor's or master's programmes?

Do you need a degree to enrol?

What advantages do micro-credentials offer?

Why choose micro-credentials?

How much does it cost to enrol in a micro-credential?

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Micro-credentials

in Flanders

Part 1

Modularisation (in Flemish HE) and MC's

- The HE offer is entirely **modularised**.

- In higher education, it is **possible to enrol in just one module (component or course unit) of a degree programme** (≥ 3 ECTS), on the basis of a *credit contract*.

- All programmes and modules (components) are registered in a **Flemish Database**: the HE Database (DHO) and the credits are stored in the Learnings and Experiences Database (LED).

HE and micro-credentials in Flanders

	ECTS credits	NQF level	Exam?	regulated?	Funded?
"Graduate-diploma"	90 of 120 cp.	5	yes	yes	yes
Bachelor degree	180-240 cp.	6	yes	yes	yes
Master degree	60-120 cp.	7	yes	yes	yes
Manama	60-120 cp.	7	yes	yes	no
Postgraduate certificate	20-60 cp.	6 of 7	yes	ja	no
Micro-credential	**3-20 cp.***	**6 of 7**	**yes**	**(not yet)**	**Some maybe**
Other certificate	no	no	(yes)	(no)	no
Certificate of attendance	no	no	no	no	no

DRAFT Flemish mc framework (Visietraject LLL in HE)

Part of the *Vision Roadmap for LLL in higher education*

- **All 20 Higher education institutions** of Flanders meet during 2023 at the **Flemish Ministry of Education and Training**

- A framework for micro-credentials is on the agenda (among other things).

- *"This framework describes the agreements for higher education institutions that want to include micro-credentials in their offerings."*

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DRAFT Flemish mc framework (Visietraject LLL in HE)

The purpose of this framework is to agree on

- The use of the term micro-credential

- The position of micro-credentials in relation to the educational offering of higher education institutions

- The characteristics of micro-credentials

- The registration of micro-credentials

- The certification of micro-credentials

- Financing micro-credentials

"The framework only applies to higher education institutions but can be used as inspiration by other providers."

DRAFT Flemish mc framework (Visietraject LLL in HE)

Within Flanders, we work with the **European definition**.

Micro-credentials aim to impart knowledge, skills and competences to students in response to **social, personal, cultural and/or labour market needs**.

A higher education institution decides for itself and **autonomously** when it wants to program a new micro-credential and when it wants to discontinue it, what designation it has, what language of instruction applies and where it is set up, as long as its content falls within a field of study for which the institution has 'teaching competence' *(onderwijsbevoegdheid)*.

DRAFT Flemish mc framework (Visietraject LLL in HE)

Nova Academy

The use of the term micro-credential

4 types of micro-credentials:

- **Type 1:** Combination of one or more existing course units from graduate, bachelor's and/or master's programmes;

- **Type 2:** Combination of one or more existing course units from graduate, bachelor's and/or master's programmes, supplemented with new offerings

- **Type 3a:** Existing content from graduate, bachelor and/or master programmes (i.e. not according to existing course units

- **Type 3b:** New content or content from existing initiatives LLL

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DRAFT Flemish mc framework (Visietraject LLL in HE)

The characteristics of a micro-credential

- The notional workload of a micro-credential is expressed in credits (ECTS). These credits are always whole numbers. The workload of a micro-credential is **between 1 and 20 credits**.

- A micro-credential can be offered physically, hybrid or via distance learning. The higher education institution always considers the **target audience** to determine the form of delivery.

- A micro-credential is defined by a set of **learning outcomes**. The content of the micro-credential is tailored to the needs of the learner, the professional field and society. These are communicated to the students in advance. The learning outcomes are graded in a level of the Flemish Qualifications Structure (VKS = EQF).

DRAFT Flemish mc framework (Visietraject LLL in HE)

- For a micro-credential type 1, the **qualification level** is that of the programme of study

- For the other micro-credentials, the **learning outcomes** must be scaled.

- Within a micro-credential, learning outcomes are **assessed**.
  The form of assessment is communicated to students in advance.

- A higher education institution provides appropriate **guidance** for students.

- Students enrolled in micro-credentials have access to the **same services** as graduate, bachelor's and master's students.

- Micro-credentials are qualifications and can be used within an EVC procedure (**Recognition of Prior Learning**) to apply for exemptions.

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DRAFT Flemish mc framework (Visietraject LLL in HE)

External quality assurance of micro-credentials

- The **internal** quality assurance of the lifelong learning offer is part of the institution's educational quality assurance policy. To this end, the institution considers the **standards and guidelines (ESG)** for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area.

- Micro-credentials of universities and universities of applied sciences fall, for **external** quality assurance, within the scope of the *institutional review.*

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DRAFT Flemish mc framework (Visietraject LLL in HE)

The certification of micro-credentials

To Do

- Today, the certification of micro-credentials is not regulated.
  The institution issues its own certificate, which does not have to be recognised by another institution, nor is it registered in the LED database. If it is a micro-credential of type 1 or 2, the student can receive credit certificates *(creditbewijzen).*

- **It is desirable** that this situation is adjusted so that the certification of a micro-credential is done according to a fixed structure, and that it can also be registered in the LED database. The legal provisions concerning a diploma and diploma supplement can be taken as a basis here.

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DRAFT Flemish mc framework (Visietraject LLL in HE)

Registration of micro-credentials

To Do

- Today, the registration of micro-credentials in the higher education database is not possible. Only in case of a micro-credential of type 1 or 2 can an enrolment in a course unit be registered.

- **It is desirable** to adjust this situation so that the registration of a micro-credential in the higher education database becomes possible in a uniform manner.

Integrating the Flemish LED and European digital credentials is highly desired by HEI, but no progress is communicated yet on a 'Mandated Issue Idea'

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DRAFT Flemish mc framework (Visietraject LLL in HE)

Standstill in July 2023

The funding of micro-credentials

- Today, the financing of micro-credentials is **possible** if it is a type 1 micro-credential, or the type 2 part that consists of course units from graduate, bachelor's and/or master's programmes, if the student registers via a **credit contract**.

- Rules on tuition fees are also applicable only in this situation.

- Other mc's are not funded today.

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Conclusion: micro-credentials on two tracks

Modules – 'credit contracts'	LLL – specific modules
Existing components (course units) of a degree program	New content and form
Regulation (Codex HE)	No (Codex HE) regulation
Credit bearing	Not always credit bearing
Fee is regulated	Fee is free
Internal and external QA	Own QA
Part of a degree	Autonomous entities
Administration, procedures, handling … like regular programs	Special administration, procedures, handling, scheduling …
Study load ≥ 3 ECTS	Study load < 3 ECTS possible
Registered in the HE database (LED)	Not registered in the HE database (LED)

Micro-credentials on two tracks

Modules – 'credit contracts'	LLL – specific modules
Deconstructing the (degree or qualification) system	Supplementing the system
No additional regulation/legislation needed	**Need for regulation (?)**

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Flemish Education Council (VLOR) *

Official recommendation

- The Flemish Education Council, in Dutch: *'Vlaamse Onderwijsraad' (VLOR),* is the **official advisory body** on the education and training policy of the Flemish Community.

- Representatives of **all the different stakeholders in education** and training meet in the VLOR. Together they look for ways to further improve education and training in Flanders.

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Flemish Education Council (VLOR) recommendation (October 2023)

- Keep European counsil's definition and standard elements
- Diversity in institutions and providers: **broader than HEI**, including VET (Vocational Education and Training), adult education and non-formal learning
- Flexibility in concepts! *("different kinds of micro-credentials"…)*
- MC is a container concept *("and this is good")*
- Level playing field for institutions and providers
- QA and transparency: no extra regulations needed
- Professional **&** personal skills (lifelong **and** 'life-wide' learning), but **not** informal learning
- Extra funding is needed

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Flemish Education Council (VLOR) recommendation (October 2023)

Happy with **European support** to

- Services and tools to support the development

- Support the coöperation between member states and stakeholders

- Support the technical implementation by exploring the development of Europass-platform

- Finance the development and research on MC's

- *MC development supported by Skills development systems*

- *Repositories, catalogues are important*

- *LED (Central Learnings and Experiences Database) should link to Europass.*

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No (VLOR) recommendation on:

- Size of micro-credentials…
  ("smaller than a qualification and large enough to have meaningful learning outcomes")

- ECTS is not obligatory

- EQF (or NQF) recommended, but not obligatory

- ESG (QA Standards & Guidelines) is not obligatory

- No mention of 'badges' or 'micro-degrees'

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The HEIs MC comfort zone

EQF level

8

7

6 — HE MC's

PHD ?

VET + Adult education

5

4

3

2

1

2 4 6 8 10 12 14 16 18 20   30   40   60   ECTS

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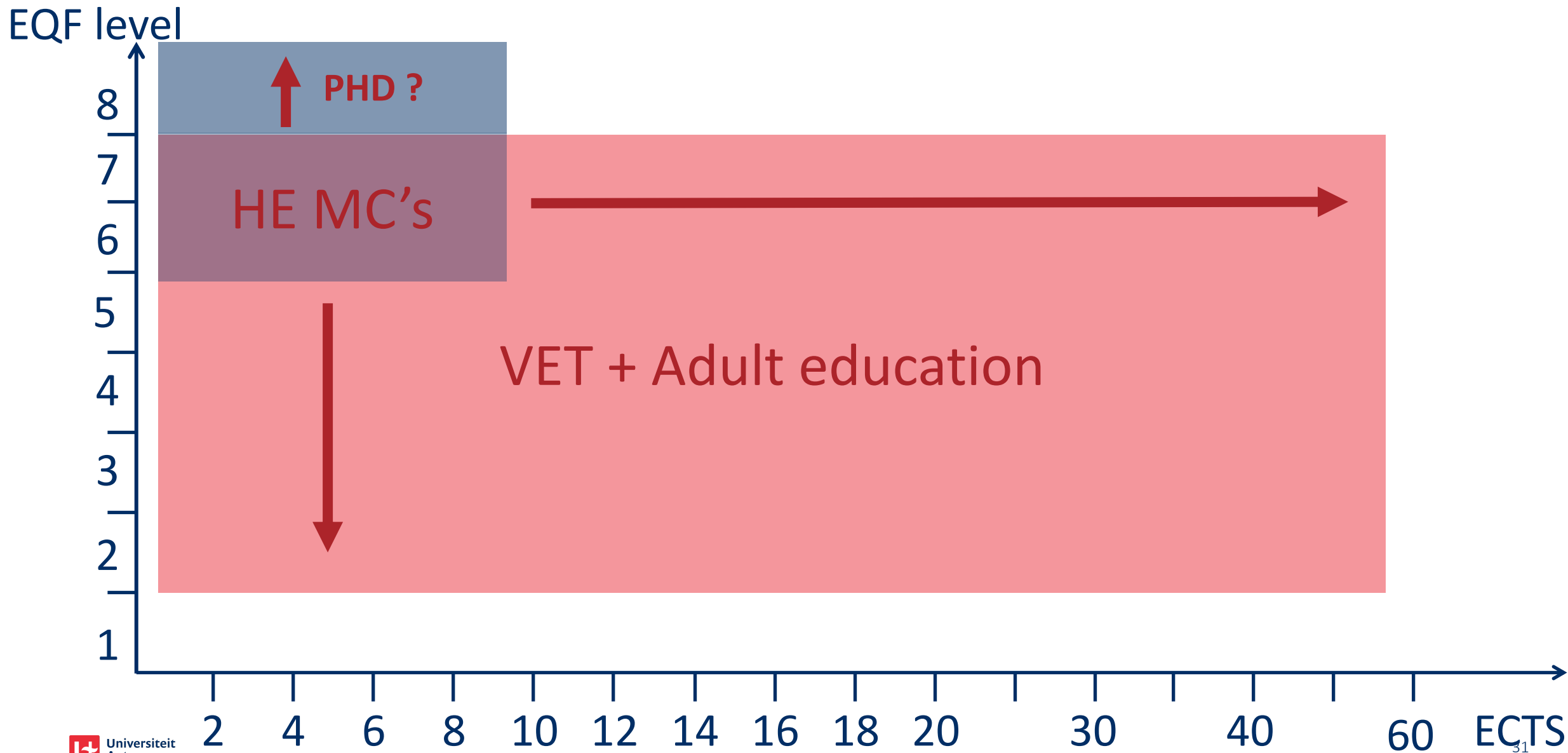
Three pillars of the micro-crdential ecosystem

EQF level

QA: ESG

8 — PHD ?

7

HE MC's

6

5

VET + adult education

4

3

2

1

2 4 6 8 10 12 14 16 18 20 30 40 60 ECTS

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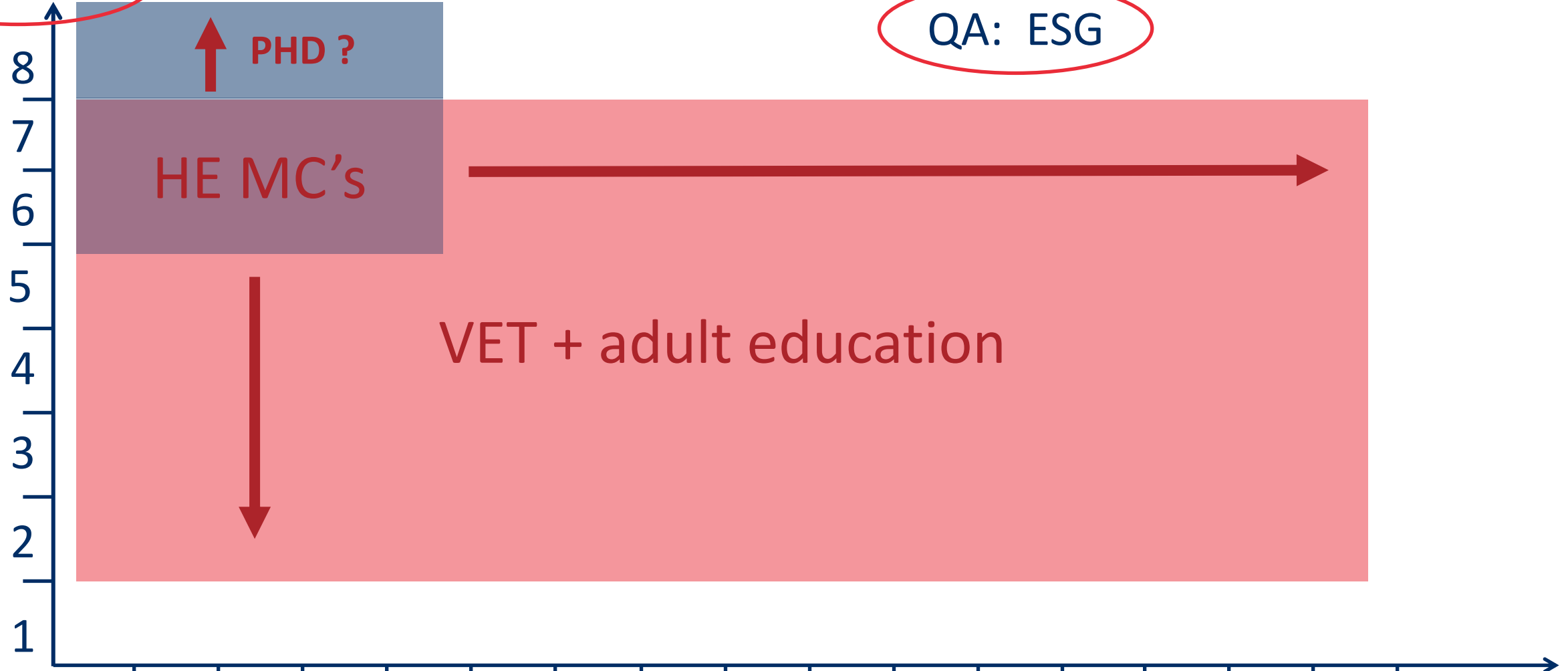
Qualification level (EQF) of MC's (Belgium Cedefop)

Figure 5. **EQF levels attributed to microcredentials at the national level**

NB: Respondents were allowed multiple choice answers.
Source: Survey of stakeholders representing VET providers (n=74).
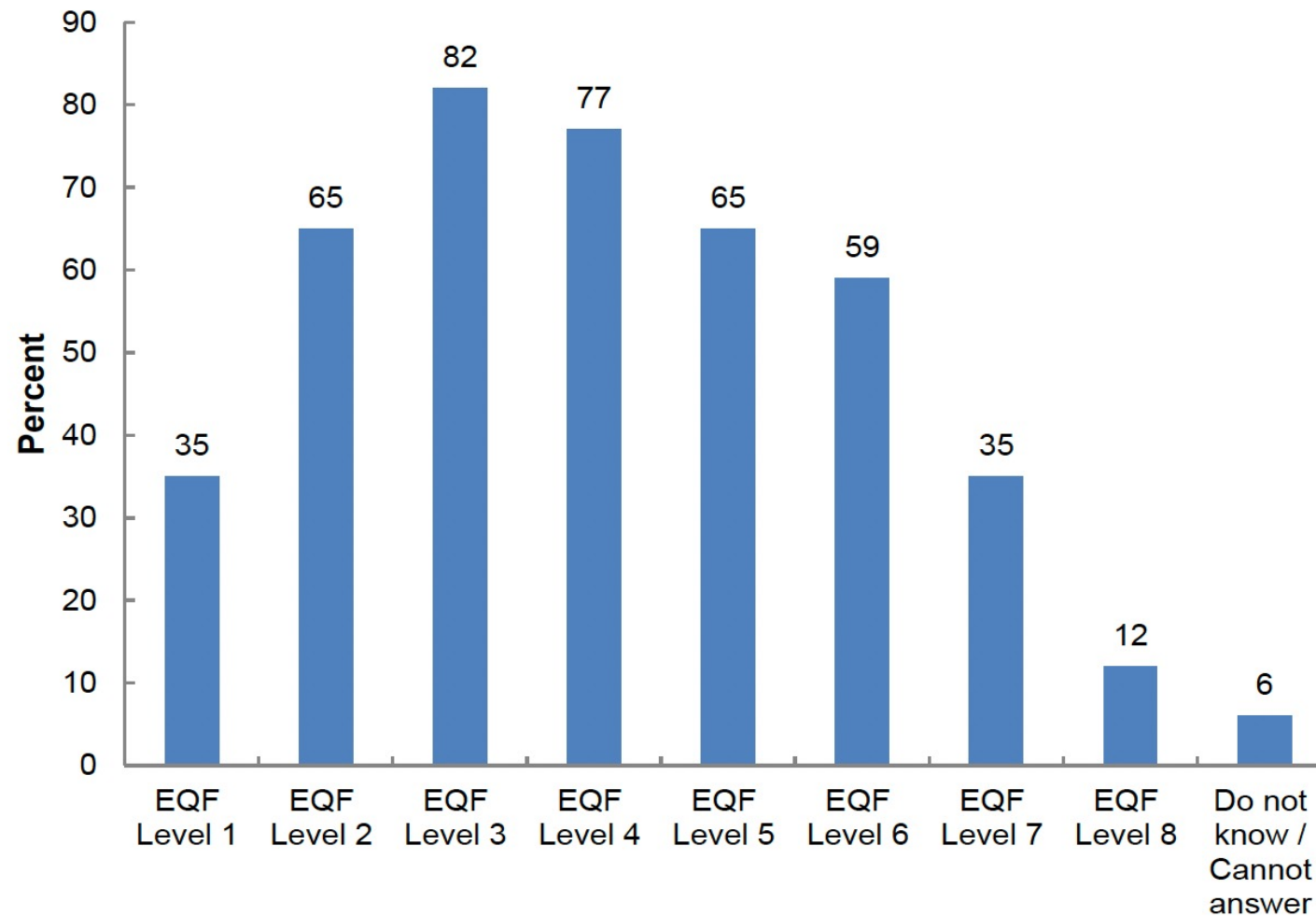
Lifelong learning

@ UAntwerp

Mission statement LLL UAntwerp (Visietekst OWR 2022)

- UAntwerp is a provider of LLL and translates **innovations & developments in scientific research** to society

- UAntwerp is a **lifelong academic partner** before, during and after the initial education (BAMA).

- We provide post-**academic broadening, deepening, upskilling and reskilling**

- For **personal** and **professional** development.

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LLL @ UAntwerpen: what?

"Everything after bachelor or master degree"

- Postgraduate certificates (20-60 ECTS)
- Micro-credentials (3-20 ECTS)
- Short- and longrunning courses (Nexus, Linguapolis,…)
- Lectures and study days
- Programs for working students
- Science communication
- (Open university)

+ guidance & counseling for lifelong learners!

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LLL @ UAntwerp: how?

- Nova Academy (alliance UGent, UAntwerpen en VUB)

- **Decentralized** (initiative at the faculteities/academies)

- (**No** *Center for Continuing Education*)

- Collaboration (disciplines, universities, associations)

- Demand driven and offer driven (in form and content)

- Organisation according to the needs of the working field and society

- Quality assurance processes difined

- Financial independant (incentives, not funded)

- Information, **guidance** and counseling provided (Centrum WeST)

Faculty action plans

- **Vision development on LLL** in your own specific context and with a view to the specific field of work.

- A methodology to ensure the **alignment** with the professional field/society and to expand the cooperation with partners, organizations and other higher education institutions in LLL.

- An action plan to identify and **eliminate key barriers** to LLL in the faculty.

- Establishment in the faculty of an **LLL cell** that monitors the above quality aspects and initiates and facilitates new initiatives.

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Principles quality assurance for micro-credentials

- Quality assurance for the lifelong learning options is part of the University of Antwerp educational **quality assurance policy**.

- Quality assurance for the lifelong learning options is coordinated to the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (**ESG**).

- Quality assurance for the lifelong learning options as a whole within the University of Antwerp is organised in compliance with the **subsidiarity** principle, with distinctions between the various categories in the lifelong learning options and competences assigned at the most appropriate level.

- Quality assurance is **fit for purpose**: relevant, effective and with the least possible administrative burden in terms of administration and scheduling.

Micro-credentials

Lessons learned

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Challenges

- Go from an *offer-driven* tot *demand-driven* portfolio *(tropism to 'education' iso 'business')*
- Stackability (granularity is not a problem yet)
- Intergenerational classes: opportunities and challenges
- Administrative burden for teachers and learners
- Student administration tools and systems are not adapted to LLL *("invoices?")*
- Compensation for faculty (tutor fees)
- European digital credentials (and the mediation to them)

Challenges

- Evaluations (exams) are not always needed or desired by the working field

- Accreditation for governmental LLL incentives is a tricky process

- Theory vs practice dilemma for some teachers

- What about courses of < 3 ECTS? (Learning outcomes?)

- …

Positive sides (also from UGhent)

- Feeling of being part of a movement

- Feeling of being relevant to a bigger target group

- Being able to offer something approachable

- Networking opportunities

- Feeding theory with practice (and vice versa)

- Having a public for new research outcomes

- Adaptatiopn of course content is easier

- New chances for research data collection (& funding)

- New internship opportunities

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Micro-credentials

Status @ UAntwerp

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UAntwerp: 100 MC's

- 58 thaught in English
- Mainly MC Type 2 and 4
- Incl. 35 summer & winter schools
- All faculties!

- Not all finetuned for LLL yet ...

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Medicines (2)
- [ ] History (11)
- [ ] Harbour and transport (1)

Show more +

Programme level

- [ ] Bachelor
- [ ] Master
- [ ] Advanced Master
- [ ] Bridging programme
- [ ] Preparatory programme
- [ ] Teacher training programme
- [ ] Postgraduate
- [x] Micro-credential (55)
- [ ] PhD
- [ ] Other

Show less -

Type of course or training

- [ ] Academic programme
- [ ] Evening course
- [ ] Short course or continuing education (22)
- [ ] Language course
- [ ] Preparatory course
- [ ] Programme for working students
- [ ] Summer or winter school (33)
- [ ] Double degree

Show less -

Faculties

- [ ] Pharmaceutical, Biomedical and Veterinary Sciences (3)
- [ ] Medicine and Health Sciences (7)
- [ ] Arts (15)
- [ ] Design Sciences (7)
- [ ] Social Sciences (8)
- [ ] Law (6)
- [ ] Business and Economics (4)

Advanced Analytical Techniques in Heritage →

💬 Taught in English | **Programme levels** Micro-credential | **Type of course or training** Short course or continuing education

Analytical and Imaging Techniques for Heritage Objects →

💬 Taught in English | **Programme levels** Micro-credential | **Type of course or training** Short course or continuing education

Animal Law, Rights and Representation →

💬 Taught in English | **Programme levels** Micro-credential | **Type of course or training** Summer or winter school

Arts & Media Archaeology →

💬 Taught in English | **Programme levels** Micro-credential | **Type of course or training** Summer or winter school

B

Becoming an Olympian in Sports Analytics →

💬 Taught in English | **Programme levels** Micro-credential | **Type of course or training** Summer or winter school

Books and Culture →

💬 Taught in English | **Programme levels** Micro-credential | **Type of course or training** Summer or winter school

Examples new MC's UAntwerp 2023-2024

- **Classic and Modern Methods of Epidemiology**

    The methodology of the study of health and disease in human populations

    Medicine, 12 credits, 740€, *part of the postgraduate Epidemiology*

- **Building Information Management voor infrastructure works**

    BIM Infra – a methodology for sustainable infrastructure and road works

   Engineering, 3 credits, 1.800€, close *collaboration with industry*

- **Laboratory Animal Science (Function B)**

    How to use laboratory animals in an optimal way in (PHD)research?

    Biomedical sciences, 3 credits, 450 - 540€, program or summer school, *stackable*

    + FELASA certificate

Example: MC Environmental mediator

- **Faculty of Law**
- Target group: professionals who want to facilitate or deblock enviropnmental issues in large infrastructure works in the public space
- Inderdisciplinary program: 4 + 1 modules
- EQF level 7, 9 ECTS credits, 3.315€

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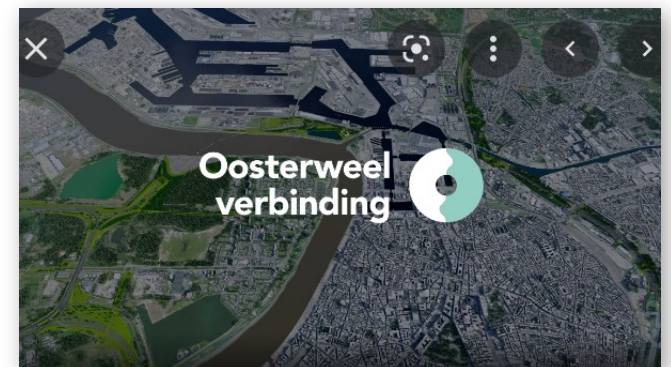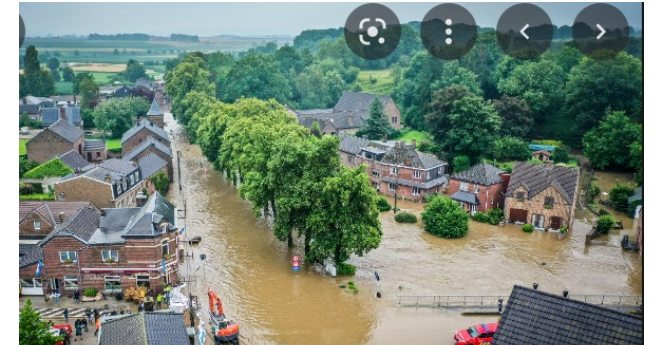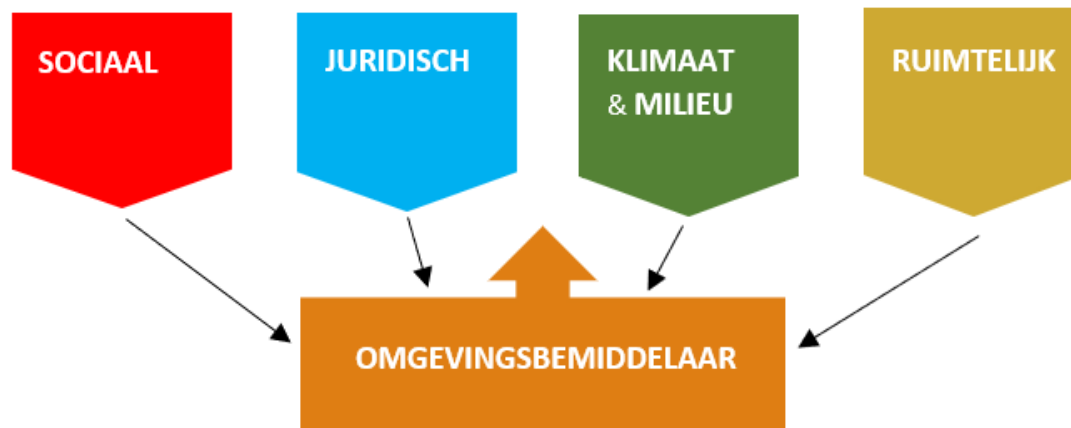
Thank you

Micro-credentials

How big is small?
Scope in ECTS and EQF-level

Scope in ECTS (1 ECTS = 25 - 30h of study)

- Nova Academy: 3-20 ("Scope should be limited, e.g. 9 ECTS")
- Spain ≥ 15
- Germany: 1 - 9
- The Netherlands: 1 - 30
- Ireland: 1 - 30
- Estonia: 6 – 30
- European Mooc Consortium: 4 - 6
- TU Graz: 5
- KU Leuven: 1-60?

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Scope in ECTS for European Universities Alliances

- Una Europa (KU Leuven?): 20 ECTS

- 4EU+ (Sorbonne,...): 1 – 15 ECTS

- ECIU University: 1 – 3 (small size)

- ENHANCE (TU Delft,...): varioius (all >3 and < 30)

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Common Micro-Credential Framework

- Have a total Workload (or study time) of no less than 100 hours and no more than 150 hours (4-6 ECTS).

- Be levelled at level 6 (bachelor), level 7 (Master), and level 8 (third cycle) with options for levels 4/5 (in combination with ECTS) in the European Qualification Framework or the equivalent levels in the University's national qualification framework.

- Provides a Summative Assessment that enables the award of academic credit, either directly following successful completion of the Course or via Recognition of Prior Learning upon enrolment.

- Operates a reliable method of ID verification at the point of assessment.

- Provides a transcript that sets out the learning outcomes for a Course, total study hours required, EQF level and number of credit points earned.

Common Micro-Credential Framework

Additional Recommendations for Courses under the CMF

- Courses should be designed so that the number of hours of study per week is manageable in busy lives.

- Courses aimed at employees and building workplace skills should combine a mix of theory and practice to ensure their learning has direct relevance to the workplace.

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Micro-credentials

Interuniversity European mc framework

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Collaboration and mobility with micro-credentials within European Universities Initiative alliances

Pedagogical and organisational problems

- connecting with institutional and cross-institutional policies related to continuing education

- sharing a joint vision on the micro-credential to be developed

- composing a joint course team, ensuring cross-institutional educational and IT support, teaching and learning design of the course,

- deciding on the digital delivery platform, formative and summative assessment and feedback,

- agreeing on assigning an award, defining an admission framework,

- agreeing on a joint quality assurance scheme,

- developing a joint business plan,

- developing a learner recruitment plan,

- concluding a consortium agreement

- developing a sustainability framework.

Thank you