Online course catalogues and databases for transparency and recognition 2 (OCTRA 2)
01.01.2023 – 31.12.2024

Information provision on higher education study programmes, study courses and micro-credentials for the purposes of the credential evaluation
## Conclusions

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17 October 2024, Riga

Welcome to the OCTRA 2 project
01.01.2023 – 31.12.2024

Main outcomes:

- Explored national practices, recommendations or approaches to micro-credentials and online course catalogues → country reports and **comparative study report**

- **Guidelines** on the information provision on study programmes, study courses and micro-credentials for the use of credential evaluation

- **Strengthened the dialogue** between HEIs and ENIC/NARIC offices:
  - ➢ Peer learning activity (20.03.2024) in Warsaw, Poland
  - ➢ Four national workshops in the partner countries (05-06.2024)
 - ➢ International conference (17.10.2024) in Riga and online

Project website:

https://aic.lv/en/par-aic/projects/octra-2
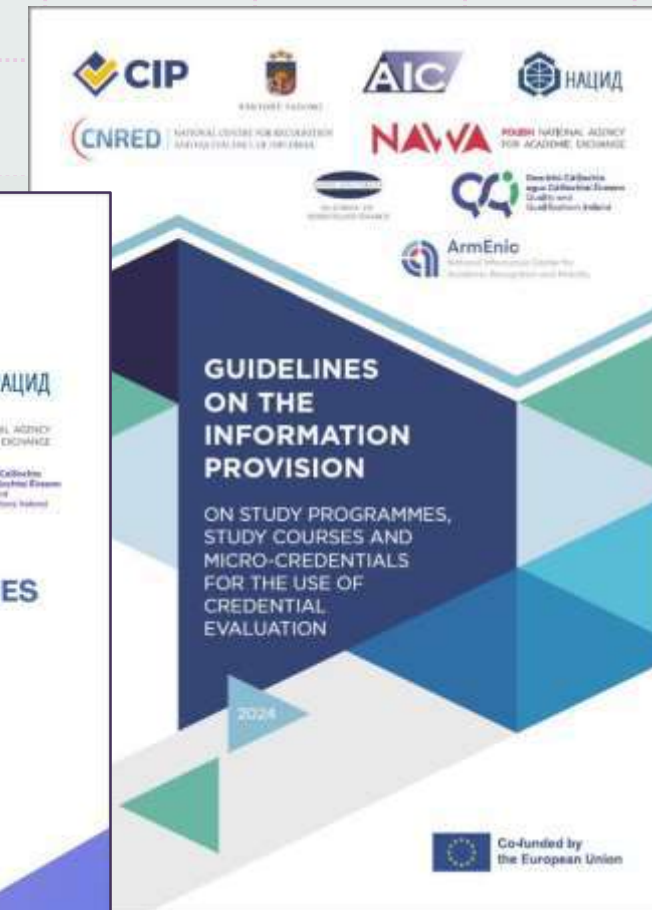
OCTRA 2 project partners

- Academic Information Centre (AIC, coordinator), Latvia

- National Centre for Information and Documentation (NACID), Bulgaria

- National Centre for Recognition and Equivalence of Diplomas (CNRED), Romania

- Qualifications in Higher Education (CIP), Bosnia and Hercegovina

- *Narodowa Agencja Wymiany Akademickiej* (NAWA), Poland

- National Information Center for Academic Recognition and Mobility (ArmEnic), Armenia

- Quality and Qualifications Ireland (IQQ), Ireland

- BA School of Business and Finance (BASBF), Latvia

- Council of Rectors of Latvia (LRC), Latvia
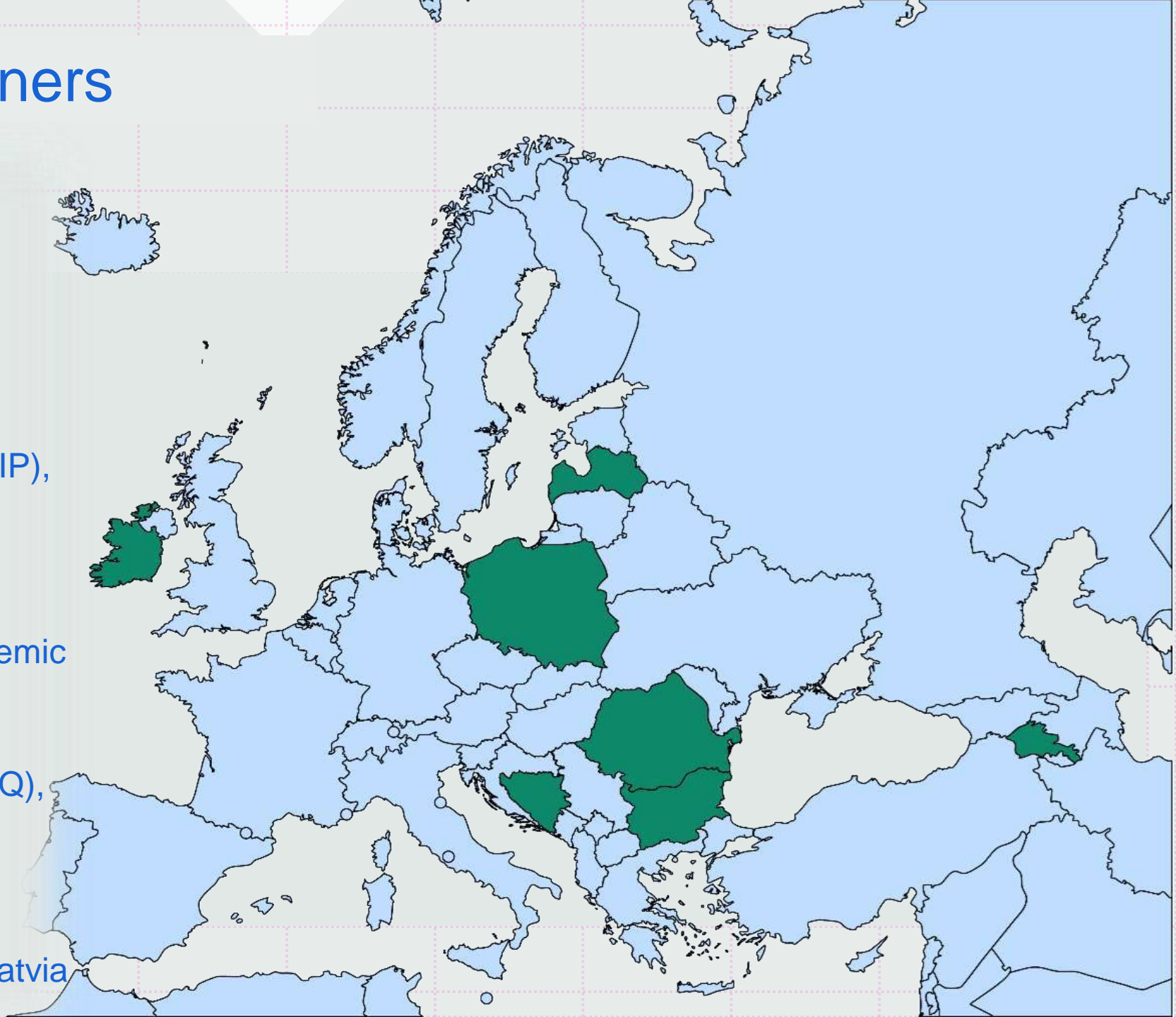
Information for the OCTRA 2 Comparative Report
gathered in two project periods:

OCTRA Comparative Report Country Reports of OCTRA (2020-2022) by:	OCTRA 2 Comparative Report Country Reports of OCTRA 2 (2023-2024) by:
• Academic Information Centre (**Latvia**)	• Academic Information Centre (**Latvia**)
• Centre for Information and Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education (**Bosnia and Herzegovina**)	• Centre for Information and Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education (**Bosnia and Herzegovina**)
• Narodowa Agencja Wymiany Akademickiej (**Poland**)	• Narodowa Agencja Wymiany Akademickiej (**Poland**)
• National Centre for Information and Documentation (**Bulgaria**)	• National Centre for Information and Documentation (**Bulgaria**)
• Agency for Science and Higher Education (**Croatia**)	• National Information Center for Academic Recognition and Mobility (**Armenia**)
• Education and Youth Board of Estonia (**Estonia**)	• National Centre for Recognition and Equivalence of Diplomas (**Romania**)

Information sources (Country Reports)

On course catalogues

- National level legislation (definition, information provision)
- Survey of HEIs (263 responses)
- Case studies of course catalogues (32 course catalogues)
- Interviews with ENIC/NARIC credential evaluators

On information provision on learning leading to micro-credentials

- National legislation (definition, information provision, recognition and validation practices)
- Survey of HEIs (146 responses)
- Interviews with HEIs (28 interviews)

Main conclusions on course catalogues

- Most HEIs have already **developed a course catalogue** that has public access and is not limited to internal use

- **Content and function of the course catalogues varies** regardless of the country of location and on a national level

- Data on external **quality assurance is rarely provided** in course catalogues

- Varied results on the content of the catalogue leading to the to the conclusion that there is a need to **reach a common understanding on the content**

- The **ECTS User's Guide** does not ensure sufficient methodological support in terms of designing online course catalogues

Main conclusions on smaller learning units leading to micro-credentials

- There is still a lack of understanding on a national level on the **concept of a micro-credential** and what type of learning can be considered to be a micro-credential

- Many HEIs provide **learning opportunities outside formal study programmes**, these learning units not always are part of existing study programmes

- Information on learning opportunities outside formal study programmes can be found either on **HEIs' websites or other information platforms**

- Information provided by HEIs on micro-credentials / smaller learning units offered by HEIs in many, but not all cases, covers information highlighted by **Council Recommendation of 16 June 2022 on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability**

Main conclusions of in-depth case studies

In-depth analysis of 32 course catalogues in 7 countries

- *Main conclusions:*
- Course catalogues provide information **on study programmes and courses**, information on study related matters can be found elsewhere on the HEIs websites
- Information for **applicants and students** are provided in different sections of the website
- Information in **national language(-s)** and information in **foreign language** might be different and structured differently

28 semi-structured interviews with HEIs' representatives

- *Main conclusions*:
- HEIs provide **varous smaller learning units**
- HEIs representatives primarily see that smaller learning units were chosen by learners because they give a chance to **improve person's professional qualification in a shorter time**
- HEIs implement this type of learning as it is **additional revenue** for many HEIs and **there is a demand**

Information on qualifications valued by credential evaluators

Based on:

interviews with ENIC and NARIC experts

Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee and European Area for Recognition Manual (2012 and 2023)

Council Recommendation of 16 June 2022 on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability

On Bologna cycle programmes

- Identified **10** mandatory
- **6** optional information elements

On micro-credentials

- Identified **12** information elements

Guidelines on **improvement of course catalogues** and **information provision on micro-credentials** for the use in credential evaluation

OCTRA 2 – Information Provision on Higher Education Study Programmes and Micro-Credentials for the Purpose of the Credential Evaluation (OCTRA 2 Guidelines)

Final Conference

Evolving Landscape of Qualifications:

Information provision for Transparency and Transferability

Riga, Latvia

17 October 2024

Dženan Omanović, Head of Department for Information and Recognition, ENIC BiH

www.cip.gov.ba

Co-funded by the European Union

Structure of the Guidelines

The guidelines were elaborated on the basis of a synthesis of consulting on the main international policy documents on information provision and credential evaluation and the results of two comparative reports, representing data on desk research carried out in eight countries on online course catalogues, (where the main focus were Bologna cycle study programmes) and six countries on smaller learning units leading to micro-credentials

Reports are available at the OCTRA 2 project's web site, thus the Guidelines outline just the main findings of reports

Co-funded by
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Online Course Catalogue - Definition

An online course catalogue is a publicly available data system developed and maintained by a higher education institution, which includes organised, detailed and descriptive information on the higher education institution and study components that form study programmes offered by the higher education institution.

Course catalogues may include information on various conceptual layers – institutional, study programme and course/module layer.

Online Course Catalogue, Full programme – minimum requests

- Full title of the awarded qualification;
- Level of the study programme and the study course (Bologna cycle, NQF/EQF level);
- Workload;
- Nominal length of the full-time programme;
- The composition of the study programme;
- Profile – speciality or field of study;
- General access requirement to the programme;
- Graduation requirements;
- Formal rights given by qualification;
- The status of the awarding institution;
- Information on the external QA of HEIs and programme.

Online Course Catalogue, Course – minimum requests

- Title of the study course/module;
- Level of the study course/module (Bologna cycle, NQF/EQF level);
- Description of study course/module (including learning outcomes,
- recommended literature);
- Workload;
- Course/module design;
- Profile – speciality or field of study;
- Course prerequisites;
- Evaluation and assessment;
- Formal rights.

Developing of a course catalogue

- Is it possible to find the information?
- Is it possible to understand the information in terms of terminology at national level?
- Is it possible to understand the information in terms of terminology at international level?

Some tips for a presentation of course catalogue

OCTRA 2 project working group recommends that course catalogues should:

- be easy to find on HEIs main website,
- be easy to navigate (interlinked),
- provide information in commonly used terminology,
- available in commonly used international language.

Some tips for an improvement of course catalogue

- Self-evaluation of the existing course catalogue presentation (layout, design, language, essential features…),
- Users' survey,
- Analysis of gathered data,
- Implementation of practical measures to improve the course catalogue.

Considerations for adding micro-credentials into course catalogue

- Should the course catalogue clearly distinguish formal study programmes, courses and modules from learning units leading to micro-credentials or other educational offerings?
- When using the same platform for providing information on micro-credentials what changes to existing structures should be made since the information on micro-credentials should include further education possibilities, i.e. stacking, combining and recognition both for future learning and if possible, for the labour market

Microcredentails - Definition

"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."

Micro-credentials – main information provided

- Title of the learning opportunity (including title of the issued credential);
- NQF/EQF level or Bologna cycle;
- Short description
- Workload expressed in measurable manner;
- Learning outcomes;
- Field(s) of study;
- Specific admission requirements (if applicable);
- Mode of learning (in-person/online/blended);
- Assessment (if applicable);
- Grading scale (if applicable);
- Possibilities for further learning/combining/stacking;
- Type of quality assurance used to underpin the micro-credential/learning unit

Online information provision platform for MCs

At least three options:

1. The creation of a dedicated section on a HEI's website or online course catalogue for ensuring publicly available information both on learning units leading to micro-credentials, as well as recognition practices of this type of learning (stacking, combining, further education possibilities);

2. If relevant, interlinking, selecting or creating a national platform and considering possibilities of connecting this platform to the Europass platform as proposed by the Recommendation (2022) or other international online information platforms providing information on micro-credentials;

3. If applicable, considering how an international information platform could be reflected on a HEI's website and the HEI's/national practises of recognition of micro-credentials could be made transparent and accessible.

Developing of external information platform for MCs
Key considerations

Will using an external information platform create extra workload for HEI's staff and hinder long-term maintenance of the information?

Will using an external information platform require extra funding for HEIs to connect with the external platform for data exchange?

Is the chosen platform considered a trusted information source?

Is it possible to adapt the chosen platform to encourage and to share necessary information in a transparent, user-friendly and systematic manner?

Will the platform ensure availability and sustainability of information in the long-term?

What is the purpose of platform – sharing trusted information, advertising, implementing online education etc.?

Does the external platform accept data exchange with HEI's internal data systems?

Developing of external information platform for MCs Development

Encouraging HEIs to ensure the availability and long-term maintenance of information on smaller learning units leading to micro-credentials

Similar step as in the case of full qualifications should taken into consideration:

- self-evaluation
- Learner's survey
- Analysis of gathering data
- Practical measures for the improvement

Necessity of referring to the OCTRA 2 Guidelines

The OCTRA 2 project team is aware of practical issues (limited resources, rapid technical developments) related to the design and maintenance of online platforms. With the respect of the autonomy of HEIs, the OCTRA 2 project team encourages HEIs (and other providers of micro-credentials) to refer to these guidelines in order tofacilitate transparency and recognition of their qualifications

ANNEXES of the OCTRA 2 Guidelines

Annex 1. Fiche for evaluation of course catalogues

Annex 2. Questionnaire for users on course catalogue

Annex 3. Fiche for evaluation of information provision on learning units leading to micro-credentials

THANK YOU !!!