



Results of study

«MICRO-CREDENTIALS IN LATVIA»

Possibilities of Introducing Micro-Credentials in the Offer of Continuing Education
Provided by Higher Education Institutions

Dr. sc. admin. Gunta Kinta
Head of Projects Department
Academic Information Centre

Dr. sc. admin. Anita Līce
Employers' Confederation of Latvia



CONTEXT OF STUDY

- **Arranged by:** Academic Information Centre – Latvian NCP-EQF
- **Conducted by:** Dr. sc. admin. Anita Līce
- **Period of study:** April – May 2021
- **Focus on:** continuing education opportunities potentially leading to micro-credentials (targeted at secondary school students and adults) offered by HEIs, yet also VET institutions have a great role in the upskilling and reskilling

AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Aim – explore the situation in Latvia, in order to contribute to the consultation process of the EU and Latvia with regard to the development of micro-credentials

1. To clarify the concept of micro-credentials and to propose its definition in the context of Latvia
2. To identify qualifications awarded in Latvia, which would qualify as micro-credentials
3. To clarify the process for the recognition and QA of micro-credentials
4. To clarify potential approach of Latvia to including micro-credentials in the LQF

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

1. Desk study – analysis of publications, laws and regulations
2. Survey of Latvian HEIs and colleges (47 respondents from 43 HEIs – 83% of the total HEIs in Latvia)
3. Interviews with experts:
 - 2 experts from HEI with experience in continuing education
 - 5 experts from HE and VET sector, labour market

24 higher education institutions		
19 colleges		
29 state-owned HEIs	13 HEIs founded by legal entities	1 branch of foreign HEI

STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT/STUDY

- Term and definition of micro-credentials
- The existing and the desired micro-credential offer
- Recognition of micro-credentials
- Quality assurance of micro-credentials
- Including micro-credentials in the qualifications framework
- Conclusions, recommendations and questions for further discussion



at international
and
national level

VARIOUS TERMS – MICRO-CREDENTIALS

- ✓ extension courses
- ✓ alternative credentials
- ✓ digital badges
- ✓ micro-certifications
- ✓ mini degrees
- ✓ nano-degrees

Meaning of «micro-credentials»

Digital badges
2013

All kinds of learning using
various titles and brands in various
forms and volumes – 2019

Certificates after open
online courses (MOOC)

CONCEPT OF MICRO-CREDENTIALS IN LATVIA

- ❖ Issues with the translation of the term “micro-credentials” into Latvian:
mikrokvalifikācija *mikroapliecinājums*
- ❖ In English, terms “credential” and “qualification” are used as synonyms, although they have different meaning:
 1. Credential – certificate, document certifying a qualification
 2. Qualification – outcome of learning activities, set of knowledge
- ❖ In this context “credential” is used as “qualification” (French – *micro-qualifications*)
- ❖ The term “qualifications” has a wider meaning than “credential”



mikrokvalifikācija

PROPOSED DEFINITION OF MICRO-CREDENTIALS

Micro-credential – a proof of the learning outcomes that a learner has acquired following a short learning experience **useful on the labour market**

These learning outcomes have been assessed against **certain standards**

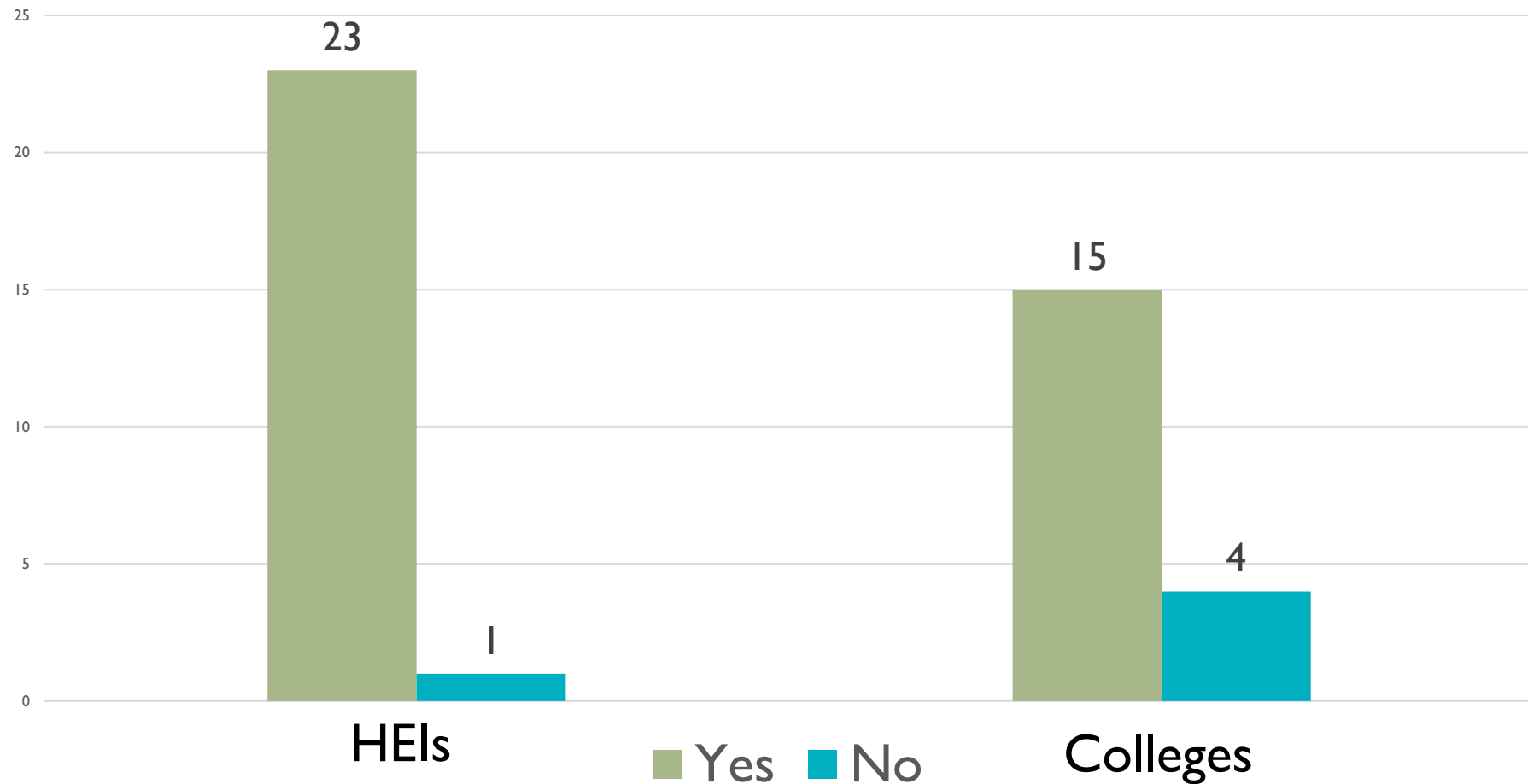
A micro-credential is credit-bearing and may be combined into a larger credential

OFFER OF MICRO-CREDENTIALS IN LATVIA

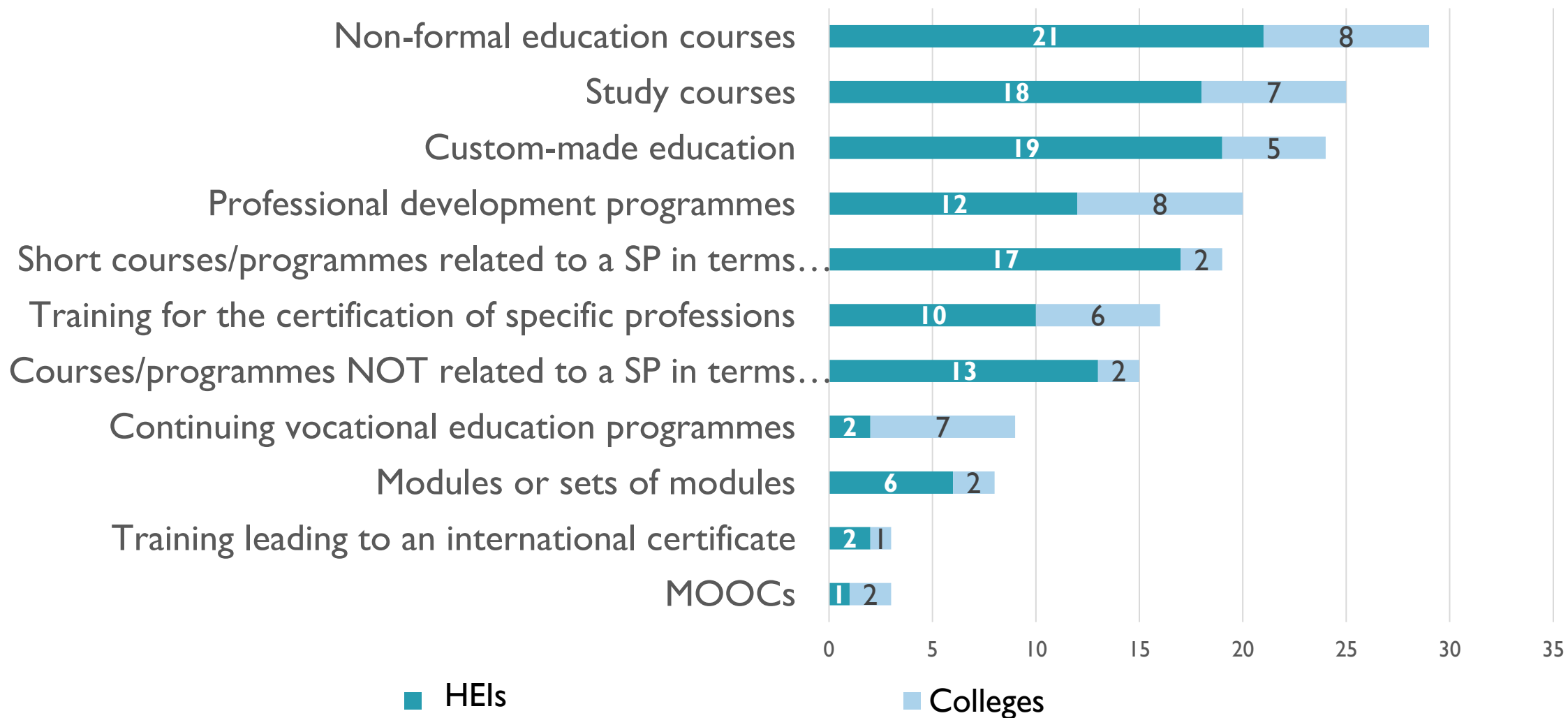
Continuing education opportunities provided by HEIs:

- **Stand-alone study courses or study modules** – part of the study programmes offered by HEIs
- **Formal or non-formal education programmes** – specially developed and offered additionally to the existing offer of study programmes
 - 1) Vocational continuing education programmes leading to a professional qualification
 - 2) Professional development programmes
 - 3) Non-formal education programmes – to acquire or upgrade their knowledge, skills, and competences necessary to perform their work duties or to attain personal goals
- **For the regulated professions** – specific types of education programmes to be acquired as part of the certification, recertification, or professional development to be allowed to practice the respective profession

NUMBER OF HEIS OFFERING CONTINUING EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES (N=43)



TYPES OF CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAMMES OFFERED BY HEIS



One education programme may correspond to different types

RECOGNITION OF MICRO-CREDENTIALS

- Certificates and diplomas
- Awarding of credits
- Learning outcomes and their assessment
- Recognition procedures

CERTIFICATES AND DIPLOMAS STATED BY THE LAW

Type of education programme	Document to be issued	Mandatory information (on certificate)
Study course or study module	Certificate (<i>sertifikāts</i>)	Details on the certificate of holder, name of the provider, title of the study course or study module, credits earned, name, surname, and qualification of the lecturer delivering the study course or study module, amount of work delivered, and the assessment of learning outcomes (Law on HEIs)
Continuing vocational education programme	Certificate of professional qualification	Details on certificate holder, name of the education institution, fact that the learner has passed the qualification examination, title of the awarded qualification, level of the vocational qualification, and LQF level
Professional development programme	Certificate of professional development with supplement – transcript	Details of the certification holder, name of the education institution, code and title of the education programme Transcript includes also duration of the programme, courses acquired (including the traineeship and tests) and their description (including the number of hours and assessment)
Professional development programmes for educators delivered by HEIs	Certificate	Details on the certificate holder, entitlement, institution delivering the programme, title of the programme, amount, and date of its approval by the ministry
Non-formal education programme	Certificate	Not specified in detail

CERTIFICATES ISSUED BY PROVIDERS

	Issued documents	Awarding of digital credential
Study courses and modules	Certificate (<i>apliecība</i>) (according to Law on HEIs)	Yes – 7 respondents Yes, partly – 7 respondents No – 17 respondents N.A. – 12 respondents
Short courses/ programmes related to a SP (part of curriculum)	Certificate (<i>sertifikāts</i>) (13 HEIs) Certificate (<i>apliecība</i>) (10) Statement (2) Attestation (1) Diploma issued by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia (1)	Yes – 4 respondents Yes, partly – 3 respondents No – 14 respondents N.A. – 22 respondents
Courses/ programmes not related to a SP (part of curriculum)	Certificate (<i>apliecība</i>) (17) Certificate (<i>sertifikāts</i>) (8) Statement (2)	Yes – 2 respondents Yes, partly – 10 respondents No – 15 respondents N.A. – 16 respondents

AWARDING OF CREDITS

	Awarding of credits	Number of credits
Study courses and modules	According to Law on HEIs	For a study course: 1-10 LV credits For a module: up to 24 LV credits
Short courses/ programmes related to a SP (part of curriculum)	Yes – 2 respondents Yes, partly – 9 respondents No – 10 respondents N.A. – 22 respondents	Usually 1-2 LV credits, but occasionally also 3,5, or 6 LV credits
Courses/ programmes not related to a SP (part of curriculum)	Yes – 1 respondent Yes, partly – 8 respondents No – 20 respondents N.A. – 14 respondents	Usually 1-3 LV credits, but occasionally also 4, 5, 6, or 8 LV credits

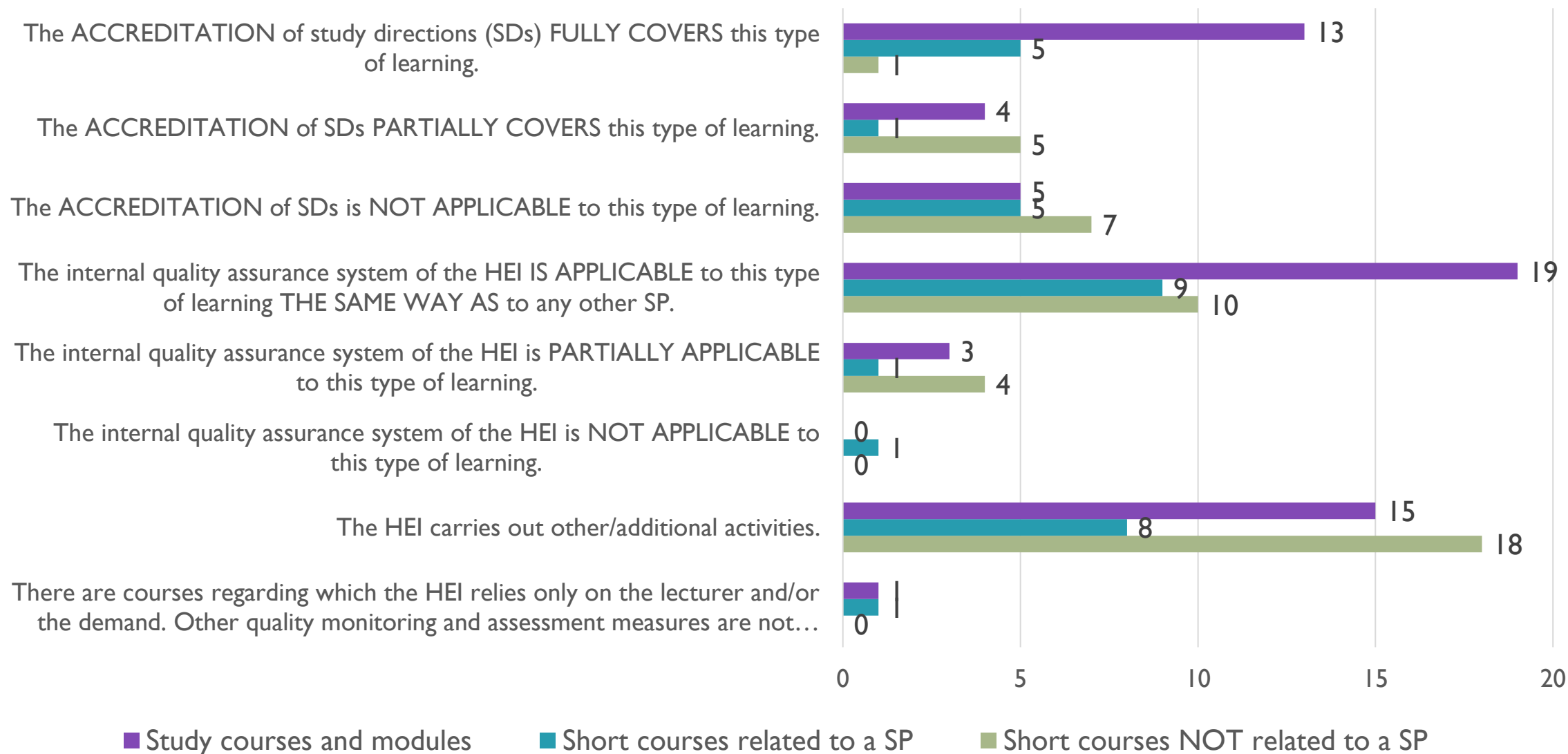
1.5 ECTS = 1 LV credit

QUALITY ASSURANCE OF MICRO-CREDENTIALS

When conducting the study (2021), QA for higher education in Latvia included:

- Licensing of all new study programmes.
- Accreditation of study fields (and the relevant study programmes) – 2-6 years period
- Accreditation of the HEI

QA OF CONTINUING EDUCATION COURSES/PROGRAMMES



INCLUDING MICRO-CREDENTIALS IN THE QF

Results of interviews:

- Referencing of micro-credentials to the NQF would contribute to their recognition in both education and labour market as NQF facilitated implementation of learning outcomes based approach
- However, the experts expressed doubts whether the referencing of micro-credentials to the NQF would bring any added value
- If micro-credentials were introduced as components of qualifications, it would facilitate their referencing to the NQF according to the respective level of qualification

MAIN CONCLUSIONS I

Certification of micro-credentials in Latvia:

1. HEIs have not yet commenced issuing digital credentials for the completion of continuing education courses/programmes
2. HEIs award credits and provide the description of learning outcomes in the certificate of completion of continuing education courses/programmes

		Study course or module, or a set of modules	Continuing vocational education programme	Professional development programme	Fully compliant Competence improvement progr. for educators	Non-formal education programme
Short learning experience: Shorter than acquisition of HE qualification		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Short learning experience: Shorter than acquisition of prof. qualification		Yes, if the set of modules to be acquired does not lead to a vocational qualification.	Less than a SP, but equal to a vocational qualification.	Yes	Yes	Yes
Labour market relevance		Not always	Yes	Yes	Yes	No (possible in specific cases)
Issue of certificate		Certification issued by the HEI	State-recognized certification	State-recognized certification	State-recognized certificate	Certification issued by the HEI
Elements included in the document	Achieved learning outcomes	No, but perfectly possible.	No, but perfectly possible.	No, but perfectly possible	No, but possible.	No, but possible.
	Assessment method	No, but perfectly possible.	Yes	Yes (tests in the transcript of records)	No, but possible.	No, but possible.
	Credits earned	Yes	No, but possible.	No, but possible.	No, but possible.	No, but possible.
	LQF level	No, but perfectly possible.	Yes (currently up to LQF Level 4)	Possible.		No
Credit-bearing, transferrable, possibility to combine into a larger credential		Yes	Possible	Possible	Possible	Possible
QA in line with harmonised standards		Yes	Yes (in case of a relevant accredited study direction)	Yes (in case of a relevant accredited study direction)		No

MAIN CONCLUSIONS II

Recognition of micro-credentials in Latvia:

Micro-credentials as the “pathway to a higher education degree” usually work for the students of study courses and modules, not for “attendees ”

Quality assurance of micro-credentials in Latvia:

- The regulatory framework for the external QA systems in HE does not describe and clarify the QA of continuing education in detail
- QA of continuing education courses/programmes is more frequently part of the internal quality assurance system
- Many HEIs tend to assume institutional responsibility for continuing education

MAIN CONCLUSIONS III

Potential approach of Latvia to including micro-credentials in NQF:

- If micro-credentials were introduced as components of qualifications (or only professional qualifications), they could be easily referenced to the LQF in accordance with the relevant qualification level
- The indication of the LQF level in the certificates would contribute to their recognition

LINK TO THE FULL REPORT

AIC – Latvian NCP study, author Dr.sc.admin. Anita Līce (2021).

Micro-Credentials in Latvia. Study Report:

https://www.nki-latvija.lv/content/files/Mico_credent_LV_draft.pdf

Latvian NCP-EQF

nkp@aic.lv

kvalifikacijas@aic.lv

<https://nqf-latvia.lv>

<https://latvianqualifications.lv>

