



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, 27.7.2022
C(2022) 5499 final

Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Bundesrat for its Opinion on the proposal for a Council recommendation on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability {COM(2021) 770 final}.

Micro-credentials offer a flexible, targeted way to help people to develop the knowledge, skills and competences they need for their personal and professional development. The European approach to micro-credentials will facilitate the quality, transparency and uptake of these learning experiences. It will strengthen the role of education and training institutions, employers, social partners and other providers of micro-credentials in making lifelong learning a reality across the European Union, and fostering accessibility for a more diverse group of learners.

The European approach to micro-credentials will support Member States, public authorities and providers to develop an ecosystem for micro-credentials and to put in place the necessary conditions to deliver on the potential of micro-credentials, in line with national circumstances and priorities. For this reason, the Commission welcomes the adoption on 16 June 2022 of the Council Recommendation with a high level of ambition.

The Commission values very much the opinion of the Bundesrat on the different points raised and confirms that, in all its actions resulting from the Council Recommendation, the division of competences between the Member States and the European level, as well as the principle of subsidiarity and institutional autonomy, will be fully respected.

The Commission confirms that the Council Recommendation fully respects the integrity of qualifications, qualifications systems or collective agreements. The proposal emphasises that micro-credentials can complement and enhance higher education, vocational education and training, lifelong learning and employability systems without disrupting them or replacing traditional qualifications.

*Mr Bodo Ramelow
President of the Bundesrat
Leipziger Straße 3-4
D - 10117 Berlin*

Micro-credentials are designed and issued to support flexible learning pathways, including the possibility to validate, recognise and 'stack' micro-credentials obtained from different providers. Stacking or combining micro-credentials does not create an automatic entitlement to a qualification or a degree. The Council Recommendation emphasises that such decisions are made by regional and national authorities or institutions in line with their awarding processes.

Integrating micro-credentials in national qualifications frameworks and systems will improve clarity on the value of micro-credentials for the learners and the labour market. The Council Recommendation states that decisions to integrate micro-credentials in regional and national frameworks or systems are made by national authorities or institutions in line with national circumstances. The European Qualifications Framework allows for the levelling of micro-credentials if and where they are included in national qualifications frameworks. The Commission will support structured discussion on the possibility to include micro-credentials in National Qualifications Frameworks in line with national priorities and circumstances.

Ensuring the high quality of the provision of micro-credentials is the basis of wide scale recognition and valuation. The Council Recommendation encourages Member States and providers to apply, adapt and develop quality assurance mechanisms for micro-credentials, making use of existing mechanisms, wherever possible. This includes current European Union and Bologna Process instruments in the field of higher education. The Commission will support the development of guidelines on how to foster transparency and apply the current European Union and Bologna Process instruments in the field of higher education to the internal and external quality assurance of micro-credentials.

Micro-credentials can signal the value of learning outcomes for smaller units of learning. Their recognition paves the way for a wider offer of such learning experiences in a comparable way across the European Union. This is without prejudice to the right of the competent authorities to define recognition procedures or to verify the authenticity of documents.

Ongoing dialogue between Member States and stakeholders is key to ensure the uptake of high quality and transparent micro-credentials. The Commission will support cooperation between Member States and stakeholders in order to facilitate the sharing of information and good practices, the exploration of the use of micro-credentials in a wide range of areas and facilitate the development of cooperation projects.

By creating an inclusive environment for micro-credentials on a European scale, the Council Recommendation helps learners, providers and national authorities, while demonstrating a clear European Union added value. Member States will be invited to inform the Commission on the measures taken to support the objectives of the Recommendation, without additional unnecessary reporting burden.

The Commission looks forward to working in close cooperation with Member States and stakeholders to support the implementation of this Council Recommendation. The Commission hopes that these clarifications address the issues raised by the Bundesrat and looks forward to continuing our political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

*Maroš Šefčovič
Vice-President*

*Mariya Gabriel
Member of the Commission*