



## **A8.1, O1: Report on the current legislation in respect to tertiary education in 12 European countries and at the EU-level**



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

***Disclaimer:** This document reflects only the author's view and the Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.*

*This document has been developed during the pilot phase of the ECIU University Erasmus+ project between 2019 - 2022.*

## Beneficiaries

- Aalborg University, Denmark
- Dublin City University, Ireland
- Groupe INSA | Institut National des sciences appliquées
- Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania
- Linköping University, Sweden
- Tampereen Korkeakoulusäätiö sr, Finland
- Hamburg University of Technology, Germany
- Universidade de Aveiro, Portugal
- Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain
- University of Stavanger, Norway
- Università degli Studi di Trento, Italy
- University of Twente, The Netherlands

## Abstract

This report provides analysis and results based on research and investigation of relevant education related obstacles and challenges found in all 12 national ECIU University related systems, and the European education system. Assessed topics are an overview of the member universities and countries, challenge-based education, mobility, continuous education, micro-credentials, recognition and accreditation. The focus of ECIU University is in continuous education and micro-credentials, as decided in the ECIU University 2030 vision paper in October 2020. More detailed analyses of relevant tertiary education legislation are planned for future, depending on near-future decisions made by ECIU University.

## Table of Contents

1	Introduction.....	4
2	Objective.....	4
3	Overview of legal obstacles in member universities.....	5
3.1	Legal entity of ECIU University dealing in continuous, non-degree education.....	6
3.2	Findings related to the visioned funding model of ECIU University.....	6
4	Challenge-based education and continuous education.....	7
5	Micro-credentials and micro-modules.....	8
6	Mobility.....	11
6.1	Flexible mobility in general.....	12
6.2	Researcher mobility.....	12
7	Recognition and accreditation.....	13
8	Summary.....	14

## List of tables

Table 1	WP8.1.1 Questionnaire results, June-August 2020. Anticipated obstacles related to micro-credentials.....	9
Table 2	WP8.1.1 Discussion results, November-December 2020. Overview of micro-credentials in member universities and countries.....	10
Table 3	Questionnaire results, June-August 2020. Anticipated obstacles related to mobility themes.....	11

## 1 Introduction

This deliverable report related to ECIU University WP8.1.1 is a result of a WP8-related questionnaire<sup>1</sup> (June to August 2020) and one round of discussions held with relevant representatives from each member university<sup>2</sup> (November to December 2020). Some information related to the theme of micro-credentials, and recognition and accreditation, has been produced together with WP7.1 (a report from a survey of accreditation systems in ECIU University member universities and a workshop on accreditation in December 2020<sup>3</sup>), as well as WP4, responsible of micro-credentials theme (ECIU University white paper on micro-credentials<sup>4</sup>). The data gathering was preceded by miscellaneous research and investigation on all 12 member countries' higher education frameworks as background work for thematic structuring.

The WP8.1.1 work is still on-going and a roadmap for the legal analysis is being created. This affects greatly the analysis of the legal and organisational form of the visioned ECIU University, and its funding model, which are discussed only briefly in this report because of the many uncertainties and operational level decisions that have not yet been made in the ECIU University alliance. It is also important to emphasize that many of the findings provided here describe the current situation in member countries, and must be reflected within strategic choices already made and future decisions regarding specific roadmaps in ECIU University.

An important frame regarding the work in WP8 is given in the strategic decisions made in the ECIU University 2030 paper<sup>5</sup> published in October 2020. The vision paper sets goals of a ECIU University dealing in non-degree education, thus limiting and focusing the legal analysis work. Micro-credentials for learners in the form of micro-modules is set as the main form of challenge-based learning. Because of these strategic choices, degree education and joint degrees have been left out of the analysis and this report.

The report consists of a description of the objective, an overview of the obstacles in the member universities in ECIU University, and descriptions of main forms of planned activities in the ECIU University and ecosystem. Micro-credentials, micro-modules, mobility and recognition and accreditation are included as separate chapters and themes of analysis. The results related to mobility theme are limited, and contacting WP6 in mobility issues is recommended.

## 2 Objective

According to the ECIU University project task 8.1.1, the report provides comparative analyses of relevant (tertiary) education legislation in all 12 national and the European education system. Given examples of topics to assess in the project proposal were challenge-based education, mobility, lifelong learning, recognition, and possibilities for offering flexible education pathways.

---

<sup>1</sup> Detailed report of the questionnaire results available from WP8.

<sup>2</sup> Detailed report of the discussions available from WP8.

<sup>3</sup> Detailed reports of the survey and the workshop available from WP7.

<sup>4</sup> ECIU University, 2021. Paving the road for the micro-credentials movement. White paper on micro-credentials. <https://www.eciu.org/news/paving-the-road-for-the-micro-credentials-movement>

<sup>5</sup> ECIU University, 2020. ECIU University 2030. Connects U for life. [https://assets-global.website-files.com/562fb917aa38ca2e349b422e/5fa153b1c8e6ad03c125f699\\_20201195%20ECIU%20-%20Opmaak%20visie%202030%204.pdf](https://assets-global.website-files.com/562fb917aa38ca2e349b422e/5fa153b1c8e6ad03c125f699_20201195%20ECIU%20-%20Opmaak%20visie%202030%204.pdf)

As mentioned in the project proposal of ECIU University, WP8 focuses on identifying the obstacles for creating a European University which the alliance will discover in the implementation process of the ECIU University. ECIU University's discoveries on its first year have indeed changed the objectives related to WP8.1.1 work in the year 2020, and as described in the Introduction chapter, legal analysis of degree education, for example in regard to 'a European degree', and themes related to it, are not included in this report. Thus, the *Activity 8.1: Analysis on legal and regulatory obstacles for a European degree awarding university* has changed, affecting this deliverable.

On the other hand, micro-credentials and other forms of continuous education, are emphasized and analysed. Additionally, a detailed comparative analyses of tertiary education legislation have not been done yet because of the strategic level of decisions made so far in the ECIU University – operational and more focused roadmaps and decisions related to educational and other goals are being made in 2021.

### 3 Overview of legal obstacles in member universities

The 12 member universities of ECIU University each have their unique national and institutional settings in which ECIU University's goals are being interpreted. On the basis of WP8.1.1 research, the themes of a possible legal entity for ECIU University and its funding model, education in general, continuous education, micro-credentials, research, mobility and data sharing have been inspected. WP8.1.1 work has also included drafting of future scenarios for the themes, as well as interpreting the meaning of ECIU University's goals in a wider European framework through Bologna process, Erasmus+ framework, European Higher Education Area EHEA and European Commission's interests.

WP8.1.1 questionnaire and its results in June-August 2020 provided an overview of each member university's own evaluation of obstacles related to many of these themes. According to the results, the most challenging situations considering ECIU University's goals, mostly related to education and research themes, are in Aalborg University in Denmark, Dublin City University in Ireland, and Linköping University in Sweden (from which by far Dublin City University providing most descriptions of obstacles or possible obstacles). Additionally, Autonomous University of Barcelona in Spain, University of Aveiro in Portugal, Hamburg University of Technology in Germany, and Kaunas University of Technology in Lithuania informed of several obstacles related to the questionnaire's themes. The least challenging situations are in INSA Group in France, Tampere University in Finland, University of Stavanger in Norway, and University of Trento in Italy (from which University of Stavanger providing lowest number of obstacles). Various themes and detailed descriptions of the challenges were found and described in a separate internal project report of the questionnaire's results.

In the WP8.1.1 discussions held in November-December 2020, the main interest of WP8.1.1 work was in the possible forms of a legal entity of a visioned ECIU University, and its funding model. Additionally, the themes of data sharing, mobility of students and researchers, and micro-credentials, including the recognition of skills and competences, were discussed. During these discussions, it was clear that the topic of continuous education, or lifelong learning, demanded more attention. The organization of this relatively recently emerged theme of continuous education<sup>6</sup> in each member country is different in each university, and its meaning interpreted differently in the responsibilities of the university and their relations to each member country's government. The theme, and its realization in each member country in relation to future decisions made related to it, has great impact on the possible form of ECIU

---

<sup>6</sup> Recent emergence refers to recent years when continuous education, lifelong learning or any other term in use and varying between countries and translations, has been recognized as an official practice of the universities in the higher education legislation of each country. Continuous education has been otherwise part of universities' activities in various ways already for a longer time.

## **The ECIU University**

University's legal entity, and its organizational and funding arrangements. The work on the legal entity of ECIU University and its funding model continues at the moment in the ECIU University project, and as there are no explicit results yet, the themes are only briefly presented. Other relevant themes mentioned above are described in the following chapters.

### **3.1 Legal entity of ECIU University dealing in continuous, non-degree education**

According to the WP8.1.1 discussions held in November-December 2020, it is clear that the concept of "ECIU University" both as a legal entity and a concept or an idea, is understood in many ways. Officially, the visioned ECIU University legal entity as an educational institution without degree training and traditional research, cannot be recognized as a "full university" in most member countries. It might be more precise to refer to a higher education institution, rather than a traditional university, while going forward with the possible forms of the new legal entity.

In some member countries, the legal frame is already flexible enough for the recognition of a new legal entity, and there seems to be an approval of the member university to become an owner of it. There seems to be different situations regarding whether ECIU University would require to be a legal entity or recognized as such in the member country. In some countries, such as France and Lithuania, the existence of a legal affiliate or the actual legal entity would be beneficial as it would grant better access to state funding or recognition as a university. In some countries, the WP8.1.1 discussions' results show difficulties for visioned ECIU University to be recognized as a full, traditional university, but instead as a higher education institution dealing in non-degree education. Nevertheless, an official recognition of the new legal entity must be found in all member countries in some way or another.

### **3.2 Findings related to the visioned funding model of ECIU University**

According to the WP8.1.1 discussions held in November-December 2020, the member countries have different funding models for higher education and universities, and different public responsibilities for universities dealing with higher education and research, and the third mission. In most, or even all member countries, the proposed mixed funding model is generally well received or even considered as the only option for arranging the funding. Public funding is difficult to access without fulfilling all the public educational responsibilities of a university in each country, most importantly including degree education. Additionally, a private or for-profit form of the legal entity would have obstacles in at least five member countries. In some countries, public funding could be accessed easier through direct government funding instead of allocating funding through the member university. Some member universities could directly fund the new university, although with some restrictions, such as demands for specific allocation for research and education budgets separately. Several member universities would be able to share HR, educational and research resources, but not directly fund the ECIU University. Some unique obstacles exist in the establishing and becoming an owner of the new legal entity. For example, in Denmark, it would require in the current legal framework that the shares of the new legal entity (when in the form of a limited company or similar) would be donated to Aalborg University.

## 4 Challenge-based education and continuous education

Continuous education, or lifelong learning, is a public responsibility of universities with different emphases in different countries, which has been both organised and conceptualised in various ways among the member countries and universities. Noteworthy, this variety of different conceptualizations of continuous education taking place in European countries is a general obstacle to European universities and to ECIU University. In WP8.1.1 work with the member universities of ECIU Universities, the following different concepts were in use regarding in the discussions of the theme: continuous education, continuous or continuing learning, further education, non-formal or informal learning, extra-curricular studies, outside degree-based education, and lifelong learning. Additionally, according to the WP8.1.1 discussions held in November-December 2020: continuous education in its various forms is not well institutionalized as part of public educational responsibilities of universities in the member countries, nor in the institutional settings of the member universities.

Continuous education, or one of the various other alternative conceptualizations, in ECIU University member universities is organized in ECIU member universities mainly in two different ways:

- 5 member universities have an integrated model, referring to continuous education integrated in traditional forms of education and degree training
  - University of Twente, Netherlands
  - Dublin City University, Ireland
  - Hamburg University of Technology, Germany
  - Linköping University, Sweden
  - University of Trento, Italy
- 7 member universities have separated continuous education into another unit or entity such as an association:
  - Aalborg University, Denmark (open university)
  - University of Stavanger, Norway (internal unit of the university)
  - University of Aveiro, Portugal (association)
  - Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain (separate unit)
  - INSA Group, France (experiences from a separate entity dealing in continuous education)
  - Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania (centralized coordination through committees)
  - Tampere University (centralized coordination, separate unit)

As seen from the listing above, there is a great variety in the usage and implementation of these type of educational activities in the member universities and countries, as well as in the institutional arrangements related to organizing continuous education. In the European University Alliances, we speak many different languages, and constant translations are taking place in the demanding project work – in any one university there might exist different concepts for continuous education in the official language of the university and in its translations into English. Decisions related to what concept or term should be used when discussing about “continuous education”, or “lifelong learning”, has to be made. This includes the emphasis on different themes of continuous education, setting more practical obstacles in each member country, as in some countries, certain concepts are in use with specific themes emphasized, such as the separation of degree and non-degree education, or curricular and extra-curricular education. As mentioned above, additionally there is a need to inspect more thoroughly how continuous education is connected to the main public responsibilities of each member university in their country-specific institutional and contractual setting in relation to their government and ministries of education. The funding of continuous education is arranged from completely self-funded studies to the participation of the costs by public funding from the government. This calls for more thorough inspection of how continuous education related activities are funded in each member university and country.

Challenge-based education and learning, which both are placed within continuous education, as well as challenge-based research, is a fundamental part of ECIU University's planned activities and strategic choices. Challenge-based education and learning is described in the ECIU University 2030<sup>7</sup> paper (October, 2020):

*"ECIU University is based on the model of challenge-based innovation, research and education, integrating the needs of society, research and industry for personalised learning. - - ECIU University offers a unified approach to challenge-based higher education at the European level. At the core of the educational pathways are European micro-credentials, fundamental building blocks for challenge-based life-long learning pathways. Learning opportunities are tailored to the learners' needs: flexible, personalised, academic skills and competence development in collaboration with the community."* (ECIU University, 2020)

Thus, micro-credentials are a fundamental and essential part of the legal analysis. Micro-credentials as a concept, and its pilot activities, are handled by WP4, and the platforms for micro-credentials are being created jointly by WP4 and WP7. Micro-credentials as a theme in the legal analysis is discussed in the following chapter 5.

In addition, according to the ECIU University 2030 paper,

*"ECIU University leads the way for removing obstacles related to funding, encouraging European flexible learning paths with micro-credentials, new mobility and quality control, and reducing of the overlap of educational offerings and support costs."*

Overall, flexibility regarding learning paths is connected to micro-credentials, new mobility and quality control. At the moment of writing this report (February 2021), roadmaps for various specific goals included in the ECIU University 2030 paper are under work.

## 5 Micro-credentials and micro-modules

Micro-credentials have been a topic of discussions throughout the project process, and at different levels of European education: European Commission has provided 'a European approach' to micro-credentials<sup>8</sup> (December 2020), and discussions have been held at Bologna follow-up meetings, Erasmus+ -related events, MICROBOL-project<sup>9</sup>, and at various national and European Universities Alliances' seminars. Additionally, micro-credentials have been discussed in detail within ECIU University in WP4 in various meetings, with several employees working on it. An ECIU University white paper on micro-credentials, 'Paving the road for the micro-credentials movement'<sup>10</sup>, was published by the ECIU University on 28 January 2021. The paper provides strategic goals and concrete steps 'for the future development of the micro-credentials movement', based on ECIU University's vision.

---

<sup>7</sup> ECIU University, 2020. ECIU University 2030. Connects U for life. [https://assets-global.website-files.com/562fb917aa38ca2e349b422e/5fa153b1c8e6ad03c125f699\\_20201195%20ECIU%20-%20Opmaak%20visie%202030%204.pdf](https://assets-global.website-files.com/562fb917aa38ca2e349b422e/5fa153b1c8e6ad03c125f699_20201195%20ECIU%20-%20Opmaak%20visie%202030%204.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> European Commission, 2020. Final report: A European approach to micro-credentials - output of the micro-credentials higher education consultation group. <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/7a939850-6c18-11eb-aeb5-01aa75ed71a1>

<sup>9</sup> MICROBOL – Micro-credentials linked to the Bologna Key Commitments is a 2-year project (2020-2022) co-funded by Erasmus+ KA3 Support to Policy reform, and more specifically "Support to the implementation of EHEA reforms".

<sup>10</sup> ECIU University, 2021. Paving the road for the micro-credentials movement. White paper on micro-credentials. <https://www.eciu.org/news/paving-the-road-for-the-micro-credentials-movement>

## The ECIU University

Focus on micro-credentials in WP8.1.1 legal analysis has been gradually increasing, especially after the publishing of the ECIU University 2030 vision paper. Significant steps and challenges exist on this road, not least the differing levels of institutional autonomy across EU member states regarding both the opportunity and approval processes required to develop recognised awards and credentials. Implementation, and the interpretation of the meaning, of micro-credentials in each university is currently diverse. In the European Higher Education Area, micro-credentials are in the process of institutionalization, as various European, institutional and national actors aim at a common understanding of it, but at the same time offer different discourses and perspectives, each according to their specific interests and needs. In ECIU University, the process is taking steps in the work of WP4 and WP7.

Additionally, varying legal and regulative challenges exist in member countries, including needs for policy-related coordination at national levels. As an on-going example of this type of national level coordination, in Ireland, a national project for micro-credentials framework, MC2<sup>11</sup>, has been started: in the MC2 project, partaking universities will *“establish a coherent national framework for ECTS-bearing micro-credentials, a system of certified qualifications in short courses delivered in flexible formats.”*

The theme of micro-credentials was asked in a WP8.1.1 related questionnaire in June-August 2020. A summary of findings of the answers to the questionnaire is provided in the table 1.

Please answer yes/no depending whether legal obstacles are anticipated when making the goal reality in ECIU University. If you answer "yes", please provide a short explanation of the problem.	Finland	Sweden	Norway	Lithuania	The Netherlands	Germany	Spain	Portugal	Italy	Ireland	Denmark	France
Develop micromodules and microcredentials with ECIU member universities:		Yes			Yes			Yes			Yes	
Create agile, tailor-made life-long learning opportunities with ECIU member universities:						Yes			Yes	Yes		

Table 1 WP8.1.1 Questionnaire results, June-August 2020. Anticipated obstacles related to micro-credentials.

In the results of the WP8.1.1 Questionnaire, University of Aveiro (Portugal) informs of a general obstacle related to the process of micro-modules and micro-credentials (possibly a need to make changes to accreditation dossiers). In Denmark and in The Netherlands, micro-credentials might include an obstacle, depending on its meaning and status. Representatives from Linköping University mention possible problems with public study or student funding (study benefit or similar social benefit). Regarding agile lifelong learning opportunities, Hamburg University of Technology notifies of different national and local frameworks as a major obstacle overall for ECIU University. In Italy (University of Trento), the focus has been in the young students' community, and an institutional level shift of strategic focus to lifelong learning and continuous education might be needed. Depending on what "agile and tailor-made" means, in Linköping University in Sweden, and in Dublin City University in Ireland, obstacles might exist.

In a round of WP8.1.1 discussions with the member universities' representatives, micro-credentials was included as one of the discussion themes. A summary of results can be found in table 2. Micro-credentials and micro-modules, among other continuous education activities of the member universities, have been implemented in various ways, from, for example, being separated from

<sup>11</sup> Irish Universities Association. Multi-Campus Micro-Credentials (MC2) project. <https://www.iaa.ie/ourwork/learning-teaching/multi-campus-micro-credentials-mc2-project/#>

## The ECIU University

traditional education to the responsibility of an assigned association, and from being centralized to one administrative unit to being integrated in the traditional degree education in the faculties. Overall flexibility in adopting micro-credentials in their current institutional and national frameworks can be seen in six member universities and countries. Major legal or regulative obstacles and changes were found from four universities and countries, and accreditation related obstacles in four universities. Additionally, it is important to consider that obstacles at institutional level might be easier to overcome than possible legal changes or other obstacles at national levels.

<b>Flexibility to adopt micro-credentials, at institutional and national level</b>	<b>Institutional level obstacles anticipated</b>	<b>Major legal or regulative obstacles anticipated</b>	<b>Accreditation related obstacles anticipated</b>	<b>National level coordination and framework for micro-credentials needed</b>
Dublin City University (Ireland)	Kaunas University of Technology <sup>12</sup>	Linköping University (Sweden)	Kaunas University of Technology	INSA Group (France)
Tampere University (Finland)	Hamburg University of Technology	Kaunas University of Technology (Lithuania) <sup>14</sup>	University of Aveiro	Dublin City University (Ireland)
Hamburg University of Technology (Germany, State of Hamburg)	Aalborg University <sup>13</sup>	Autonomous University of Barcelona (Spain)	University of Stavanger	Autonomous University of Barcelona (Spain)
INSA Group (France)		University of Twente (The Netherlands)	University of Twente <sup>15</sup>	University of Twente (The Netherlands)
University of Aveiro (Portugal)				
Aalborg University (Denmark)				
University of Stavanger (Norway)				

Table 2 WP8.1.1 Discussion results, November-December 2020. Overview of micro-credentials in member universities and countries<sup>16</sup>.

Additionally, WP4 has identified four core obstacles and important themes for the implementation of the micro-credentials in the ECIU member universities:

- Lack of a common definition of micro-credentials
- Lack of awareness about micro-credentials
- Confusion about micro-credentials
- Recognition of micro-credentials in existing structures

<sup>12</sup> Technical or platform related issues.

<sup>13</sup> Issuing micro-credentials to learners coming from outside of Danish system.

<sup>14</sup> Recognition, QA and accreditation related issues.

<sup>15</sup> Perhaps also in other countries – not discussed in detail.

<sup>16</sup> When country is mentioned in brackets, it refers to anticipated obstacles at both institutional and state levels. When the institution is mentioned without a country reference, obstacles are anticipated only at institutional level.

## 6 Mobility

Mobility issues in ECIU University are on the responsibility of WP6. WP8.1.1 work on obstacles and challenges related mobility have been restricted so far to general mobility, and the mobility of researchers, as described in the ECIU University 2030. It is important to emphasize here that more information about mobility issues in ECIU University are available from WP6, as well as from WP4 and WP7, and that results provided here are limited to anticipated *legal* obstacles.<sup>17</sup>

In the WP8.1.1 questionnaire and its results in June-August 2020, the following mobility themes were included:

- Develop guaranteed recognition of mobility among ECIU member universities (incl. all forms of mobility).
- Create a transnational model for Erasmus-like consortia with ECIU member universities (incl. structural mobility windows and a business model for mobility windows)
- Develop joint internships with ECIU member universities (incl. transnational Erasmus-like alliance for traineeships).
- Develop joint mobility for staff with ECIU member universities.

Please answer yes/no depending whether legal obstacles are anticipated when making the goal reality in ECIU University.	Finland	Sweden	Norway	Lithuania	Netherlands	Germany	Spain	Portugal	Italy	Ireland	Denmark	France
Develop guaranteed recognition of mobility among ECIU member universities (incl. all forms of mobility).		Yes				Yes					Yes	Yes
Create a transnational model for Erasmus-like consortia with ECIU member universities (incl. structural mobility windows and a business model for mobility windows).		Yes			Yes			Yes	Yes		Yes	
Develop joint internships with ECIU member universities (incl. transnational Erasmus-like alliance for traineeships).					Yes					Yes		
Develop joint mobility for staff with ECIU member universities.					Yes							

Table 3 Questionnaire results, June-August 2020. Anticipated obstacles related to mobility themes.

INSA Group’s (France) and Dublic City University’s (Ireland) answers notify of a need for more coordination and agreements between institutions (both bilateral and multiple institutions), regarding developing guaranteed recognition of mobility in ECIU University.

Granted recognition is seen as an obstacle in Hamburg University of Technology (Germany), especially regarding staff mobility and internships. Overall clarity for this goal needed, according to Linköping University’s (Sweden) answers.

If the aimed model for Erasmus-like consortia is not a transnational model, no legal obstacles are anticipated, but if ECIU University progresses towards a transnational model, some might emerge (in University of Aveiro, Portugal, among others). Overall clarity for this goal is also needed (Linköping University, Sweden).

<sup>17</sup> For more information, contact WP6 and/or see WP6 deliverables.

## The ECIU University

University of Twente (The Netherlands) mentions of obstacles related to governmental involvement, ethics and proctoring, and that IP agreements should be based on Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs), guidelines from the Institute of Internal Auditors, or similar basis.

In the theme of developing joint internships with ECIU University member universities, Dublin City University (Ireland) informs that, among others, contractual and/or employment status, and insurance issues could include obstacles. Similarly, according to the answers of University of Twente (The Netherlands), immigration laws in member countries differ and might be an obstacle.

In University of Twente (The Netherlands), obstacles are anticipated in regard to legal formalities and general legal EU framework of staff mobility.

According to the discussions held with member universities' representatives in November and December 2020, the mobility theme regarding students and learners seems to be without major obstacles. The European framework, including Bologna and Erasmus+ agreements and goals for mobility, has been fully or almost fully implemented in all member countries and universities. Obstacles related to mobility seem to be motivational for students, and thus, institutional and practical in nature. More detailed overviews of both discussions themes related to mobility are listed below.

### 6.1 Flexible mobility in general

- Most member universities did not anticipate obstacles, or did not anticipate major obstacles, related to mobility theme.<sup>18</sup>
- Arrangements for the new legal entity and the ECIU University ecosystem mobility need to be created.
- Obstacles anticipated with the transferability of the planned micro-credential and continuous education activities of the new legal entity between current ECTS system.
- Aalborg University in Denmark needs to recognize ECIU University learners as "ECIU students" or with similar legal/formal status. Thus, this type of official status of the learners could be set to overcome the obstacle.
- Dublin City University in Ireland (as an English-speaking country) has very high number of incoming students; already situation problematic nationally and at institutional level. Might include obstacles.
- Limitations to exchange period times in micro-level mobility might include obstacles.
- Representatives from Kaunas University of Technology in Lithuania have concerns over the possibility of internal ECIU University mobility competing with other forms of mobility "outside ECIU".

### 6.2 Researcher mobility

- Some member universities anticipate no major obstacles related to researcher mobility (Linköping University in Sweden; University of Trento in Italy; Hamburg University of Technology in Germany; University of Aveiro in Portugal)

---

<sup>18</sup> This contradicts with findings in WP6; instead 'ECIU faces a very worrying problem of "recognition" of mobility at many universities in the Consortium.' For more information, contact WP6 and/or see WP6 deliverables.

## The ECIU University

- Obstacles could emerge with researcher mobility, when researchers are learners and simultaneously employees of the member university and who perhaps do not have a citizenship in any European country. (Tampere University, Finland; Hamburg University of Technology, Germany)
- Having several employers for an individual researcher might include obstacles in University of Aveiro in Portugal.
- Academic freedom of researchers requires researcher mobility to base on voluntary choice. This might pose obstacles if researcher mobility will be full-time and/or automatically part of ECIU University researcher profile.
- Public tasks of researchers (in public researcher positions) require teaching and research in the member university, and similarly includes obstacles if researcher mobility will be full-time and/or automatically part of the ECIU University profile. (INSA Group, France; University of Stavanger, Norway; Aalborg University, Denmark; Hamburg University of Technology, Germany; Dublin City University, Ireland; Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain)
- Promotion criteria might pose obstacles (Dublin City University in Ireland).

## 7 Recognition and accreditation

The changes mentioned in the Objectives chapter have heavily affected the work on recognition and accreditation, as the focus has moved to continuous education, lifelong learning and micro-credentials. Because WP8.1.1 work has included the theme of recognition and accreditation; a brief overview of the framework and actors is presented here.

At the moment of writing this deliverable report, ECIU University is planning scenario work related to the accreditation of micro-credentials and continuous education within ECIU University, and wider in the European and the EHEA perspective. Research on accreditation related to ECIU University goals is provided by a joint effort of WP8.1 and WP7.1, and a short survey report has been written in May 2020, and one workshop has been held in December 2020, and another one planned late April 2021.

**Results of work on recognition and accreditation issues will be described in greater detail in the deliverable related to WP8.1.3 in 2021.** In short, the following frameworks and actors, among others, are involved in the recognition of continuous education and micro-credentials:

- European and national frameworks
  - European Qualifications Framework (EQF)
  - National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) and the 12 national qualifications systems in ECIU University
  - The Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (commonly known as the Lisbon Recognition Convention—LRC)
  - European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR)
  - Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
  - The European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes
  - European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System and its guidelines
  - The Europass Digital Credentials Infrastructure (EDCI)
- Actors
  - The 12 ECIU University member universities

## The ECIU University

- The European Commission
- The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) representing quality assurance organisations from the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) member states
- National Quality Assurance and accreditation related agencies
- The European Network of Information Centres in the European Region, and the National Academic Recognition Information Centres in the European Union (ENIC-NARIC networks)

## 8 Summary

WP8.1.1 work has been affected by the overall process of ECIU University and its strategic choices. The project proposal in 2019 set the way for the start of WP8.1.1 research work, including the themes of degree education and a goal for a European degree. As the research process was and is reciprocal in nature, preliminary findings of WP8.1.1 rushed forward the need for more detailed vision related to European University Initiative's framework. The legal and institutional analysis proceeds after such future strategic decisions are made. One round of discussion with member universities' representatives is currently planned for May-June to produce more comparable information about the obstacles and how to overcome them in each university and country.

Making ECIU University a reality is demanding and challenging, and especially regarding the most ambitious goals of establishing a new legal entity dealing in continuous education, as decided in the ECIU University 2030 paper. On-going work related to the possible form of the legal entity of ECIU University, funding scenarios, challenge-based education and research, mobility issues, micro-credentials and the accreditation and quality assurance of all planned activities, will help in the analysis the current situation, and to define what changes might be required at European, national and institutional contexts.

## Acknowledgements



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union