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**The end of degrees?**

**Micro-Credentials, skills, and employability**

**SPHERE Seminar**

Venue : Université Mohammed V de Rabat. Faculté des sciences juridiques et sciences sociales (FSJSS). Av. des Nations Unies, Agdal Rabat, Maroc

2-3 JUNE 2025

This seminar organised for the EU funded initiative ‘Centralised Support for Higher Education Reform Experts (SPHERE)’ will explore the shifting landscape of higher education and the evolving role of micro-credentials and skills-based learning as it relates to employability. While many universities have provided short non-degree learning opportunities for quite some years, this has not gained much attention, either at policy levels or within the institutions themselves. This seems to be changing; In view of an increased need for learning and re-learning, and also in response to rapidly evolving skills needs in society and the labour market, the rise of micro-credentials has generated both excitement, creativity and scepticism. The improved technical capacities for flexible delivery of learning has also been a factor in this phenomenon.

How exactly are these new approaches taken up in HEIs, with regards to flexibilization of learning and university-industry cooperation? What are the changes required at the level of institutions and systems, regarding the regulatory and funding frameworks? And what does this mean for the mission of higher education institutions with regards to lifelong learning and re-skilling? How do universities compete against or collaborate with an agile and dynamic private sector, including large international companies which in many countries dominates the adult learning offer?

This seminar is particularly relevant for third countries neighbouring the EU in the Eastern Partnership, Central Asia, the Western Balkans, and South-Med countries, as they navigate their own educational reforms and workforce development challenges. As these regions work to enhance their integration into the global economy, micro-credentials offer an opportunity to bridge the skills gap and align education systems with the evolving needs of the job market. These countries also observe and are affected by European Union frameworks and policies, as well as the Bologna Process: The [European Skills Agenda](https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/skills-and-qualifications/european-skills-agenda_en) and [Digital Education Action Plan](https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/digital-education/action-plan), and more specifically the [European Education Area](https://education.ec.europa.eu/), the [EU approach to micro-credentials](https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/micro-credentials), and the [Bologna Process recommendations on quality assurance of micro-credentials](https://ehea.info/Immagini/QUATRA_-_TPG_A_recommendations_on_micro-credentials_09.11_.2023_.pdf). This seminar will provide valuable insights on the role micro-credentials can play in developing responsive, flexible education systems that support sustainable economic growth, social cohesion and life-long learning. It will pose challenging questions such as the risks and limitations of micro-credentials and whether they will compete with university degree programmes in the future.

Through current policy developments, case studies and practice exchange, participants will discuss how micro-credentials, recognized for their flexibility and alignment with labor market needs, are becoming increasingly integral to skills development and employability. Participants will examine how these innovations challenge and potentially change traditional degree structures and what policy frameworks need to be developed to support this transformation, ensuring that higher education institutions remain relevant and responsive to the demands of both students and employers.

The seminar’s learning outcomes will be:

* Understand latest European policy developments and frameworks as they relate to micro-credentials in higher education and draw parallels with developments in EU partner countries
* Receive industry and private sector insights on micro-credentials for life-long learning and skilling, and the expectations they have for higher education providers
* Assess higher education student expectations as they relate to employability and the role micro-credentials can play.
* Assess micro-credentials as they relate to student-centred learning and employability, and the implications for curricula design and university-industry relations.
* Situate micro-credentials in relation to unversities’ digitalisation strategies.

**Target audience**

Approximately 70 Higher Education Reform Experts (HERE) from South-Med countries, the Eastern Partnership, Central Asia, the Western Balkans, representing higher education institutional leadership, policy makers and student representative bodies.

*Arrival – 1 June*

Arrival/ Opening reception at invitation of host

***Day 1 – 2 June***

9:00 Welcome

9:30 Opening keynote: Micro-credentials, skilling and the role of the HE sector

10:00 Exploring micro-credentials in HERE countries: Perspective from previous events and technical assistance missions – *SPHERE Team*

10:30 Coffee break

11:00 The context in Morocco: Degrees, Employability and the emerging role of micro-credentials

*Presentation and discussion/reactions from HERE*

12:00 Policy maker-round table: Micro-credentials and higher education policy – Where are we?

13:00 Lunch

14:00 Industry-round table: Skilling for current and new jobs through formal and non-formal education – the role of higher education, life-long learning and micro-credentials

15:00 Break-out groups with industry partners and HERE representatives

16:00 Coffee break

16:30 Reports from break-outs followed by student representative discussion and reactions

*-Student panel discussion: Micro-credentials for inclusive, flexible, personalized leaning pathways*

17:30 Close

Official dinner (sponsored by SPHERE)

***Day 2 – 3 June***

9:00 What does this mean for higher education institutions? Strategies, funding, management quality assurance and regulations

-Short presentation and panel discussion

10:00 Break-out groups

* Group 1: Flexibilization of the curricula and student-centered learning – the potential role of micro-credentials
* Group 2: Quality assurance and micro-credentials
* Group 3: National regulatory frameworks
  + *Case study + intro to break-outs in each one*

11:00 Coffee

11:30 Digitalization strategies, online learning and micro-credentials

*Case studies + discussion*

12:30 Conclusions and main take-aways

13:15 Lunch

14:30 Tour/cultural programme