REBALANCE

Engaging Physiotherapists and gymnasts in the digital performance of their profession for distance guidance in physical exercise

REBALANCE MICRO-CREDENTIALS FRAMEWORK

R1/A5

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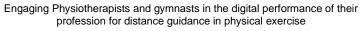
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Executive Summary

Work is a significant part of our life since we spend at least 1/3 of our day. The Covid-19 outbreak brought an immediate change in our work style and many people were forced to work permanently from home. Within the work-from-home concept, people exaggerating working hours reduce their movement and the balance of their physical activity. The limited physical activity and the non-ergonomic equipment worsen the body structure, and continuous aches in the back, neck, knees, and hands appear more recently.
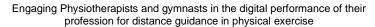
The COVID-19 restrictions brought into place the home fitness concept due to convenience and safety. These activities are based either on videos or fitness apps without personalised guidance from professionals that can encounter the existing musculoskeletal problems of the user. This is a current challenge that appeared for professionals such as physiotherapists and trainers since they cannot assure that their guidance to their patients or clients would be enough to ensure that the execution of these activities would be successful at home without harming themselves.

Physiotherapists and trainers can provide their services in real-time. When instructing clients from a distance, they may lack the technical skills and knowledge to effectively guide them and ensure that their end practitioners do not harm themselves.

The Rebalance project aims to solve these problems by identifying the following needs:

- The need to enhance training on performing physical exercises in circumstances when a physiotherapist or trainer is not available in real-time, using digital methods.
- The need for physiotherapists and trainers to improve their services by implementing digital solutions that allow them to provide individualised assistance to their patients/clients, even if they can't teach them in real-time.
- To increase awareness about the negative effects of long periods of sitting on one's physical structure and health.

To meet the detailed requirements, we want to develop an accessible online solution improving the conditions in which physiotherapists and trainers may guide persons from a distance without having to deal with generic training apps. Professionals who take part in our program will learn how to use new technologies in their industry, develop their digital abilities, and receive a final, free-to-use product to operate in their daily activities.
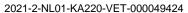
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Micro-credentials

What are micro-credentials?

Micro-credentials are the end result of short courses created in order to acquire skills and competences complementary to a fast-changing society and labour market. These do not replace traditional qualifications. The European approach to micro-credentials indents to provide a universal and clear definition, together with general European standards that allow for the skills and competencies acquired to be recognised within all EU-27.

The European micro-credential's view offers a common definition that is certified across many sectors/areas of education, independently of its background and national context.

"A micro-credential is the record of the learning outcomes that a learner has acquired following a small volume of learning. These learning outcomes have been assessed against transparent and clearly defined standards. Courses leading to micro-credentials are designed to provide the learner with specific knowledge, skills and competencies that respond to societal, personal, cultural or labour market needs. The learner owns micro-credentials, can be shared and are portable. They may be standalone or combined into larger credentials. They are underpinned by quality assurance following agreed standards in the relevant sector or area of activity."

(European Commission, 2021)

How can we verify knowledge through this technique?

The 10 principles

The 10 principles presented below specify the nature of micro-credentials, highlighting their key characteristics of the European approach to micro-credentials, being universal and available to be applied in any area or sector.

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1. Quality

Micro-credentials are subject to internal and external quality assurance. This quality assurance process must be fit-for-purpose, clearly documented, accessible, and meet the needs of learners and stakeholders. Internal assurance should cover all of the following:

- Overall quality of the micro-credentials themselves.
- Quality of the course, where applicable, leading to the micro-credentials.
- Learners' feedback on the learning experience leading to micro-credentials.
- Peers' feedback including other providers and stakeholders.

2. Transparency

Micro-credentials are measurable, comparable and understandable with clear information on learning outcomes, workload, content, level and learning offer.

3. Relevance

Micro-credentials should be designed as distinct, targeted learning achievements, and learning opportunities leading to them are updated, as necessary.

4. Valid assessment

Micro-credentials should have learning outcomes that are assessed against transparent standards as well as methodologies that will ensure that the actual person does a valid assessment it is supposed to assess.

5. Learning Pathways

Micro-credentials should be designed to support flexible learning pathways, including the possibility of:

- Stack.
- Validate.
- Recognition.

6. Recognition

Recognition should have a clear signalling value of the learning outcomes and create ways for a wider offer of small experiences in a comparable way across the EU.

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7. Portability

Micro-credentials are owned by the credential-holder (learner/trainee) and can be stored easily including digital credential-holders (e.g.: Europass), always in line with the General Data Protection Regulation.

8. Learner-centred

These should be designed to meet the needs and criteria of the target group (learners) and considered as part of the continuous improvement of the micro-credentials.

9. Authentic

Micro-credentials should contain sufficient information to check the identity of the credential holder, the legal identity of the issuer and the date and location of issuing.

10. Information and guidance

Information and advice should be incorporated into lifelong learning guidance services. It should also reach the broadest possible group of learners, supporting education, training and career choices.
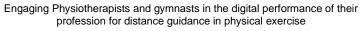
How to design and issue micro-credentials

As micro-credentials are a standard for all European countries, there are certain elements that should always be present to allow a feeling of trust and transparency. These elements will allow schools, training centres, employers and other relevant elements to understand the value and content of micro-credentials and compare them to other possible educational/training certificates.

Mandatory elements

For these to be standard and general to all contexts, the European Commission suggests the presence of mandatory elements:

- Identification of the learner/trainee.
- Title of the micro-credential achieved.
- Country/region of the issued identity.
- Awarding body.
- Date of issuing.
- Learning outcomes.
- National workload needed to achieve the learning outcomes (in ETCs credits).
- Level of the learning experience leading to micro-credentials (EQF, QF-EHAEA).

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- Type of assessment.
- Form of participation.
- Type of quality assurance used to underpin the micro-credentials.

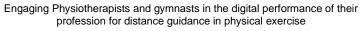There are other optional elements such as:

- Prerequisites needed.
- Supervision during the assessment.
- Grade achieved.
- Integration or *stackability* option.
- Other and further information thought to be relevant.
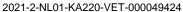
Bridge to ESCO, EQF and ECVET

Micro-credentials can be linked to the European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO) classification system, the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), and the European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) through mapping to specific levels within these frameworks.

- ESCO: Micro-credentials can be linked to the ESCO framework, which is a multilingual classification of skills, competencies, qualifications, and occupations. This allows individuals to understand how their micro-credentials relate to specific occupations and to demonstrate the skills and competencies they have acquired.
- EQF: Micro-credentials can be aligned with the EQF levels, as mentioned earlier, which ensures that they meet the same standards as traditional qualifications and allows individuals to understand how their micro-credentials compare to traditional qualifications and to demonstrate the level of knowledge and skills they have acquired.
- ECVET: Micro-credentials can be linked to the ECVET system, which allows for the transfer and recognition of credits earned through vocational education and training across different countries and systems. This allows individuals to accumulate credits from micro-credentials towards traditional qualifications, and to have their learning recognized and valued across Europe.

By linking micro-credentials to ESCO, EQF, and ECVET, they become more easily recognized and comparable across different countries and can support the development of a European-wide skills

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ecosystem. This helps individuals to upskill and reskill quickly in response to changes in the job market and to have their qualifications recognized and valued in different countries in Europe.

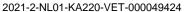*Micro-credentials on the European Qualification Framework*

Micro-credentials are short, focused, and specialized qualifications that can be earned by individuals to demonstrate specific skills or knowledge in a particular area. These qualifications are smaller in scope than traditional degrees or certifications, and they can be earned through a variety of means such as online courses, workshops, or on-the-job training.

The European Qualification Framework (EQF) is a system that aims to make qualifications more comparable and transparent across European countries. It provides a common reference framework for qualifications, which helps to ensure that qualifications are recognized and understood by employers, educational institutions, and other organizations across Europe.

Micro-credentials can be linked to the EQF in a number of ways, such as:

1. Aligning micro-credentials with EQF levels: Micro-credentials can be aligned with the EQF levels, which range from level 1 (basic) to level 8 (doctoral or equivalent). This allows individuals to understand how their micro-credentials compare to traditional qualifications and to demonstrate the level of knowledge and skills they have acquired.

2. Using EQF descriptors: Micro-credentials can use EQF descriptors, which describe the knowledge, skills, and competencies required for a particular EQF level, to ensure that they meet the same standards as traditional qualifications.

3. Accreditation: Micro-credentials can be accredited by organizations that are recognized by the EQF, which ensures that they meet the same standards as traditional qualifications.

4. Recognition: Micro-credentials can be recognized by employers, educational institutions, and other organizations as a valid and valuable form of learning, as they have been linked to the EQF.

Overall, linking micro-credentials to the European Qualification Framework can help to ensure that they are recognized, understood, and valued by employers, educational institutions, and other organizations across Europe, and that they meet the same standards as traditional qualifications.

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Certification Template

To create a certified Micro-credential module, it is first necessary to identify the mandatory elements of this. This can be done in many ways; we suggest the following table:

REBALANCE SKILLS ENHANCEMENT BADGE			
Identification of the learner: [AUTOMATED BY THE SYSTEM]			
Awarding body: THE REBALANCE PROJECT CONSORTIUM	**Date of issue:** DD/MM/YYYY [AUTOMATED BY THE SYSTEM]		**Grade achieved:** [AUTOMATED BY THE SYSTEM]
National workload to achieve the learning outcomes: (ETC)			
Level (and cycle, if applicable) of the learning experience leading to the micro-credentials (EQF, QR-EHEA), if applicable: EQF LEVEL 4 / Factual and theoretical knowledge in broad contexts within a field of work or study			
Type of assessment: 5 modules/ Theoretical part Reading and Quiz with predefined grading system	**Form of participation in the learning activity: E-learning**		
Learning outcomes: - Professionals to practice better distance guidance in clients in home physical exercise. - Professionals to guide and motivate their clients appropriately. - Professionals to prepare their digital practices in more qualitative way engaging recent technologies and legislation processes			
Prerequisites needed to enrol in the learning activities (if needed): Destined to Physiotherapists and Sports trainers			
Supervision and identity verification during an assessment:		**Integration/*Stackability* options:**	
Unsupervised with no identity verification.	x	Standalone.	x
Supervised with no identity verification.		Stackable towards another credential.	
Supervised online or onsite with identity verification.		Independent micro-credentials/integrated.	

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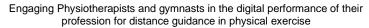
Further information:

After the realization of the Micro-credential module, we should create a badge/certificate that proves that the learner/trainee has achieved the module and has accomplished the knowledge assessment. We suggest the following template:
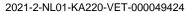

Figure 1 - REBALANCE Badge

These two elements can be presented together when certifying the completion of the course.

Table 1- Micro-credentials presentation

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