National pilot microcredentials in 34 HEI's within The Netherlands

Bart Lamboo – project lead

Context - Dutch (VET and higher) education system

Ministry of Education

The ministry has started a task force to explore the legal aspects with various stakeholders

EQF 1 - 4

law on secondary education

law on higher education

EQF 5 - 8

Umbrella organisations

MBO Raad

Vereniging Hogescholen

Our pilot has been carried out in higher education over the past 2 years

Universiteiten *van* Nederland

VET secondary vocational education institutions (58)

Universities of applied sciences (36)

Research Universities (14)

A VET Pilot on microcredentials is to start in '24

22 Universities of applied sciences took part (61%)

12 Research Universities took part (85%)

There will be a follow-up to the pilot in higher education

PILOT Micro credentials

The focus of our pilot: creating common value

Between HEI's:

• Trust and acceptance

Within society and labour market:

• Familiarity

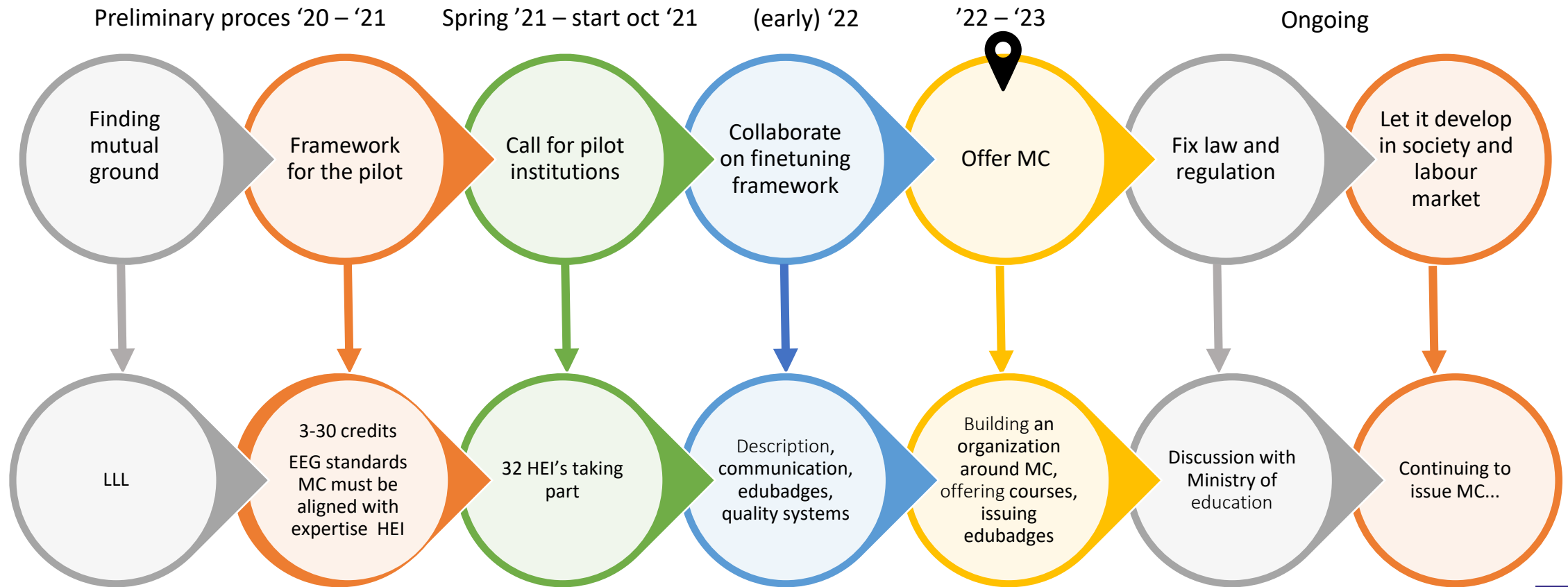• Recognize and judge the value

Bachelor – Master

Steps towards creating trust and acceptance in our pilot

Preliminary proces '20 – '21   Spring '21 – start oct '21   (early) '22   '22 – '23   Ongoing

Finding mutual ground → Framework for the pilot → Call for pilot institutions → Collaborate on finetuning framework → Offer MC → Fix law and regulation → Let it develop in society and labour market

LLL → 3-30 credits EEG standards MC must be aligned with expertise HEI → 32 HEI's taking part → Description, communication, edubadges, quality systems → Building an organization around MC, offering courses, issuing edubadges → Discussion with Ministry of education → Continuing to issue MC...

What: Framework pilot

- Based on the European framework but
    - Focused on Micro-credentials for Continuous Professional Development
    - Without financing and at a price that does not distort the market
    - Microcredentials issued within the pilot are between 3 and 30 credits

- A quality framework in line with European ESG standards, where upon institutions build their internal quality system

- Aligned with expertise (education portfolio, research expertise) of HEI

- Issued via the Edubadges service

- Aimed to implement MC in our HE system (Our ministry is examining this with its task force)
  - part of our legal framework HE
  - part of our accreditation system
  - national register MC

Quality assurance within the pilot underpinning the common value

Collective commitment to the pilot

The framework and mutual recognition are endorsed by administrators of our educational umbrella organisations

Participating institutions commit themselves to the quality framework

The Executive Board of the HEI commits to the pilot

Quality framework for the pilot

Follow ESG standards for quality assurance for mcs

In line with the standards of the European Commission

Every Institution sets up an internal quality assurance process and appoints a body to guarantee it
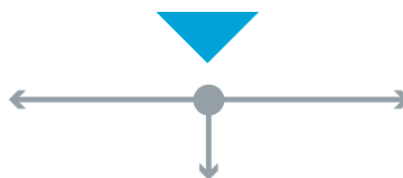
3 – 30 Credits

Mc in line with research- and educational portfolio of the issueing HEI

Use Bolognatools for describing mc as much as possible
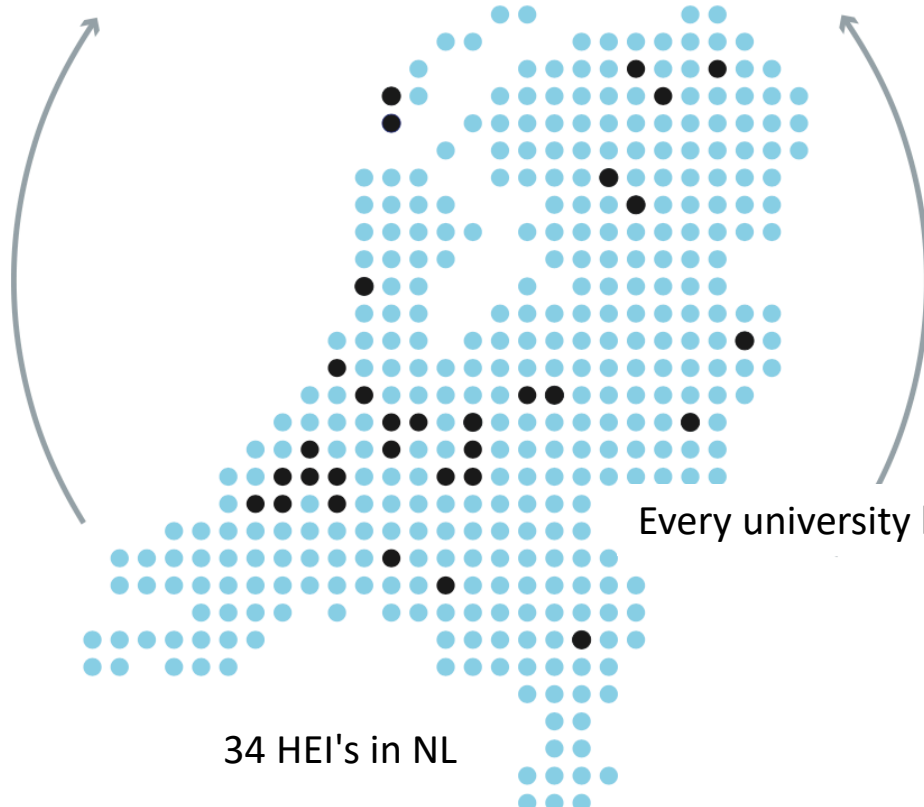
How: Project organization

Learning communities
Communication
Quality assurance
Logistics and administration

Central project leaders meetings
Calibration and knowledge sharing between project leaders
Aligning the tactical and strategic approach of the pilot

Peer-reviews between institutions
Aimed at learning from each other and jointly guaranteeing the quality agreements

Every university has an implemention team and project leader

34 HEI's in NL

A multitude of use cases from HEI's

Freedom to experiment within the set framework

Institutions determine for themselves which range of courses they certify with a micro-credential
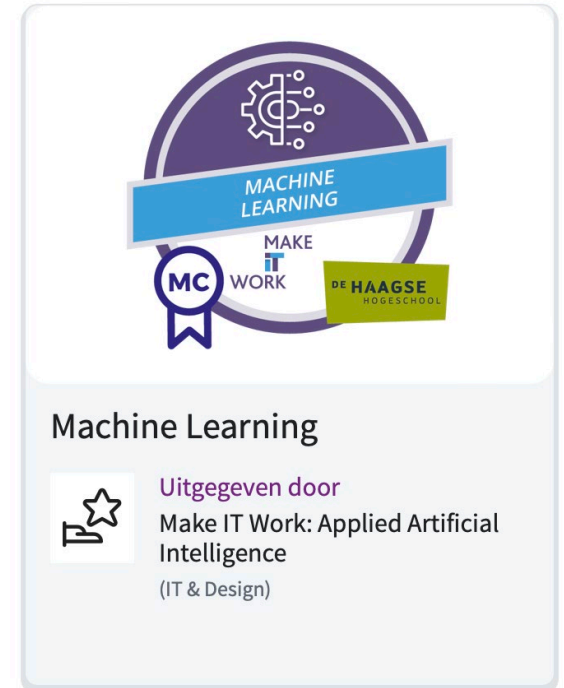
200 microcredentials and counting

Institutions put together a project team and could make use of an incentive scheme

The scale with which the pilot is carried out within the institutions differs
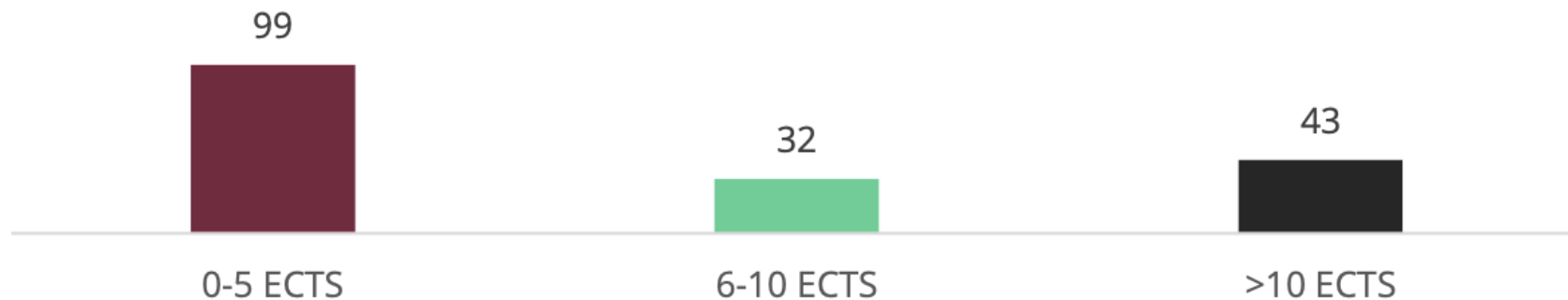
Issuing micro-credentials

- Microcredenitals are issued via the edubadges service, which was jointly designed by Surf and the institutions.
- The service follows the European directive on micro-redentials
- Microcredentials must be issued with a recognizable watermark
- The joint quality agreements are displayed under each micro-credential issued
- It is desirable to (partly) automate the administrative process. Currently, all data must be entered into the system manually. The service is working on links with multiple education systems.

Machine Learning

Uitgegeven door
Make IT Work: Applied Artificial Intelligence
(IT & Design)

What have we learned so far?
About our framework and quality assurance

- It is a strength that we have drawn up the framework together and that it has been ratified by the boards of the umbrella organizations.

- The quality framework is supported and secured within and between the institutions with peer reviews

- Why 3-30 EC?

- The actual recognition of micro-credentials between institutions is the next step
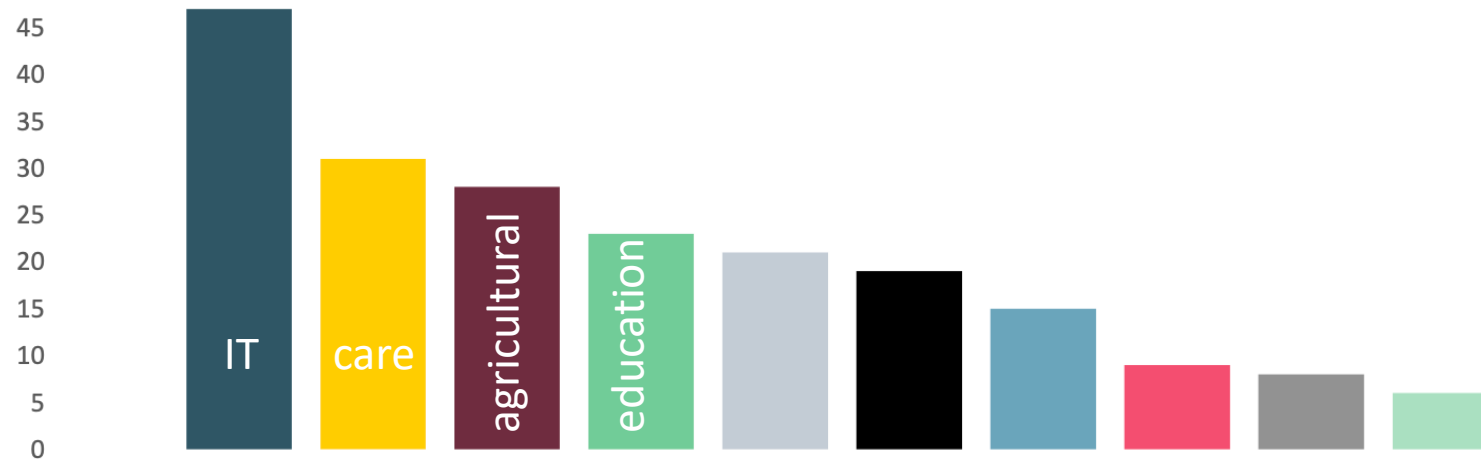
External quality assurance

Peer reviews are appreciated, but a more formal form of external quality assurance has not yet been established. Balance is important, we are thinking of possible accreditation of the system at institutional level rather than accreditation per individual micro-credential

What have we learned so far?
About the micro-credentials that HEI's offer

- Although we have not targeted this, we see more micro-credentials being issued in sectors with labor shortages such as IT, healthcare and the education sector

- Some micro-credentials are in higher demand than others - not all institutions have a good idea of the demand from employers or professionals before they put micro-credentials on the market

What have we learned so far?
About the needed organization and infrastructure

- Micro-credentials require the involvement of various areas of expertise, such as educational science, quality assurance, communication, administration and IT. It is important to mobilize these people and provide sufficient facilitation.

- Learning communities are a valued way to allow different professionals to share knowledge with each other.

- Peer reviews between institutions provide them with many new insights.

- A motivated, well connected project leader within each institution is vital

- Commitment and involvement of the Executive Board is essential

- It is desirable to (partly) automate the administrative process. Currently, all data must be entered into the system manually. The service is working on links with multiple education systems.

What have we learned so far?
Points of attention for the future

- **Legal status** - Most institutions communicate cautiously about micro-credentials to the target groups. Institutions indicate that they are cautious in their communications due to the missing legal status of micro-credentials and the current limited capacity to serve many learners.

- **Awareness and employers** - Institutions see added value in micro-credentials for professionals, but employers have limited involvement and their awareness is still limited. Institutions indicate the need for a joint and simultaneous campaign to ensure greater awareness.

- **Mutual recognition** - When we look at the mutual recognition of micro-coredentials, we will have to ensure that the certificates are described very clearly and comparably. It is also important that examination boards are involved and are well informed.

- **External quality assurance** - Peer reviews are appreciated, but a more formal form of external quality assurance has not yet been established. Balance is important, we are thinking of possible accreditation of the system at institutional level rather than accreditation per individual micro-credential

What does the future look like for micro-credentials?

- Micro-credentials are given legal status with associated quality agreements, which are widely applicable to both public and private educational institutions.

- We will create a continuous system for micro-credentials from VET to higher education and lifelong learning

- We will arrive at a feasible, lightweight form of external quality assurance for micro-credentials, possibly at institutional level or combined with broader institutional accreditation.

- MC will expand into the degree system, so that students can also benefit from it

- Educational institutions learn to respond better to major issues for society and market demands in order to jointly develop lifelong learning offerings (and micro-credentials) - a major program for this is currently starting in the Netherlands.

Let's stay in touch

More information can be found on
[the website of our pilot](#)
and [the continued project from '24](#)

At the beginning of '24 we will publish an extensive (also English-language) magazine on this subject. I would be happy to send this to you, please let me know via this email address when you would like to receive it.

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