

Current developments and ongoing questions about the implementation of Micro-credentials: Insights from Ireland

Innsbruck, Austria, 12 Dec 2022

SARAH BRADY, University of Limerick;

CAITRÍONA NIC GIOLLA MHICHIL, Dublin City University



Riailtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

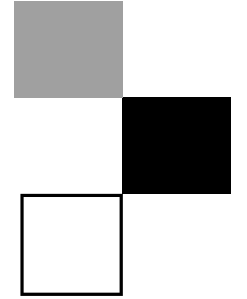


This project is funded under Human Capital Initiative Pillar 3, Innovation and Agility



Structure

- Overview of National Context
- Overview of MicroCreds
- Current challenges being addressed
- Insights



MICRO
CREDS

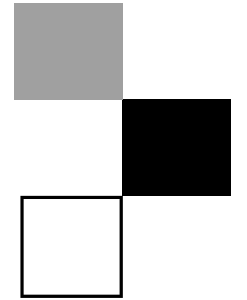




**ESTIMATE THAT 50% OF
EMPLOYEES WORLDWIDE
WILL NEED RESKILLING BY
2025**

World Economic Forum, The Future of Jobs Report 2020

Irish (University) context



The key HCI objectives are to:

- Increase provision in areas of identified skills need
- Future proof graduates with industry relevant skills for emerging technologies
- Ensure that there is a greater focus across the whole spectrum of higher education course provision on promoting and embedding transversal skills
- Incentivise continued reform and innovation in higher education provision building on best practice available nationally and internationally.

MICRO
CREDS



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



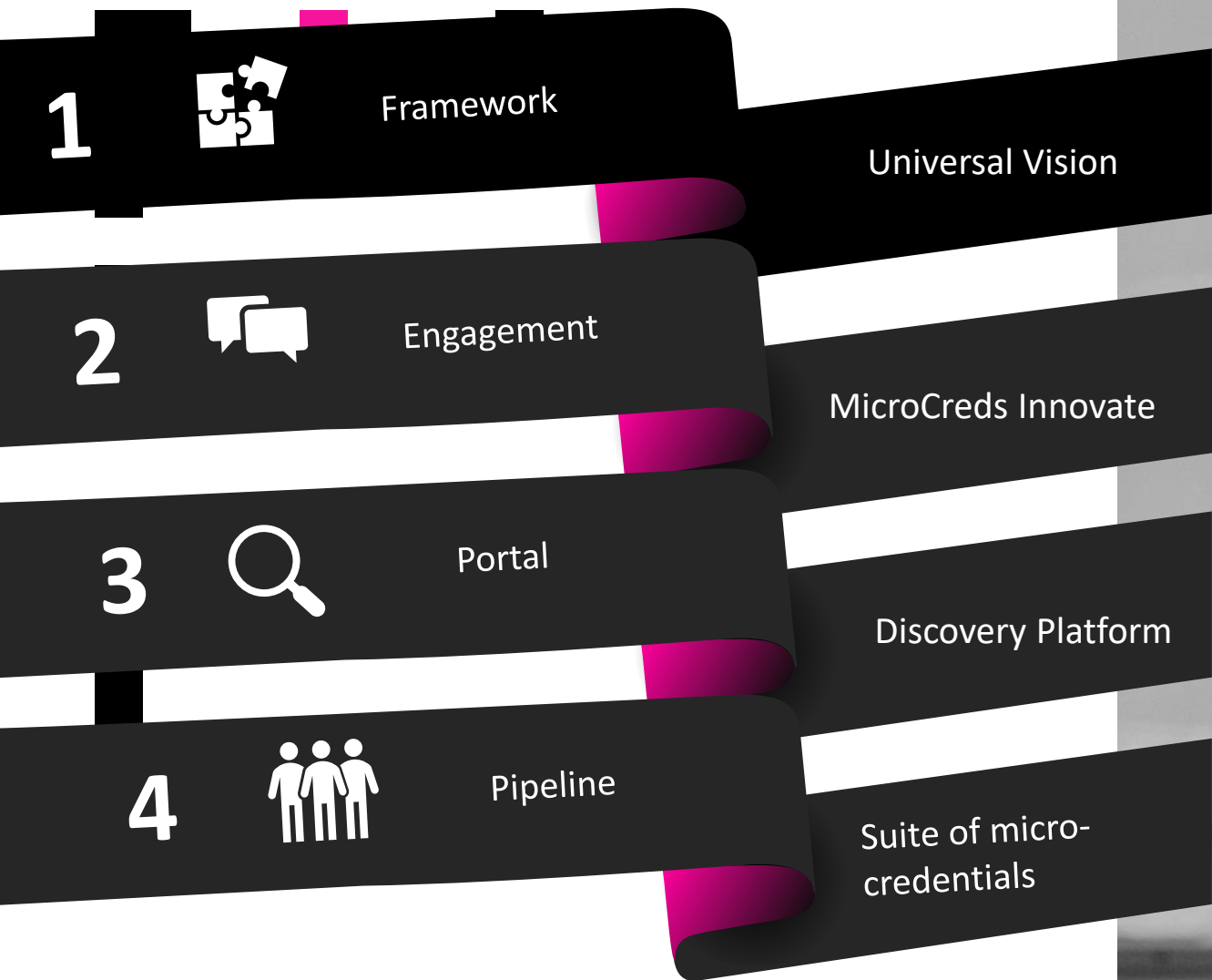
Definition

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 competences** that respond to **societal, personal, cultural or labour** market needs.

Micro-credentials are owned by the learner, 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.

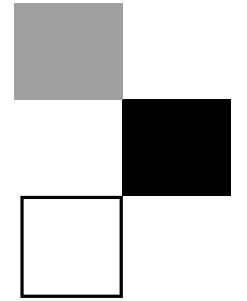
Council Recommendation on a European Approach to Micro-Credentials for Lifelong Learning and Employability 2022



Project Strands



Project Partners



MicroCreds Project Leads



**CAITRÍONA NIC
GIOLLA MHICHÍL**

Project Lead at Dublin
City University



**DR ZSUZSANNA
ZARKA**

Project Lead at
Maynooth University



**JANICE MULVANY
GLENNON**

Project Lead at NUI
Galway



DEIRDRE HARKIN

Project Lead at Trinity
College Dublin



MAGS ARNOLD

Project Lead at
University College Cork



SORCHA MULCAHY

Project Lead at
University College
Dublin



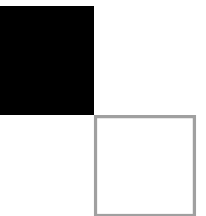
DR SARAH BRADY

Project Lead at the
University of Limerick

**MICRO
CREDS**

QA, NFQ and QQI

- Irish universities are **autonomous** in their primary responsibility for internal QA as well as having regard to **statutory** QA guidelines in the development of these procedures
- NFQ provides for minor, special purpose and supplemental awards (national descriptors sectoral protocols apply)





Pilot MicroCred Constitutive Elements

Level 6-9 NFQ (5-7 EQF)

Credit size 1-30 ECTS

Quality assured and credit bearing

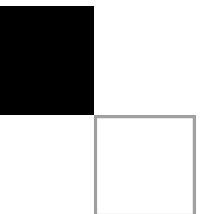
Agreed data fields

Stand alone credential, some may stack towards a larger award

Transparent and objectively assessed against stated learning outcomes

Bologna Tools and Framework support recognition

Challenge lies in the mainstream operationalisation of MCs at HEIs





INSIGHTS and questions

Evolving understanding

Clear communication and understanding of value proposition is key

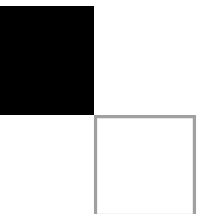
Pilot towards a national framework

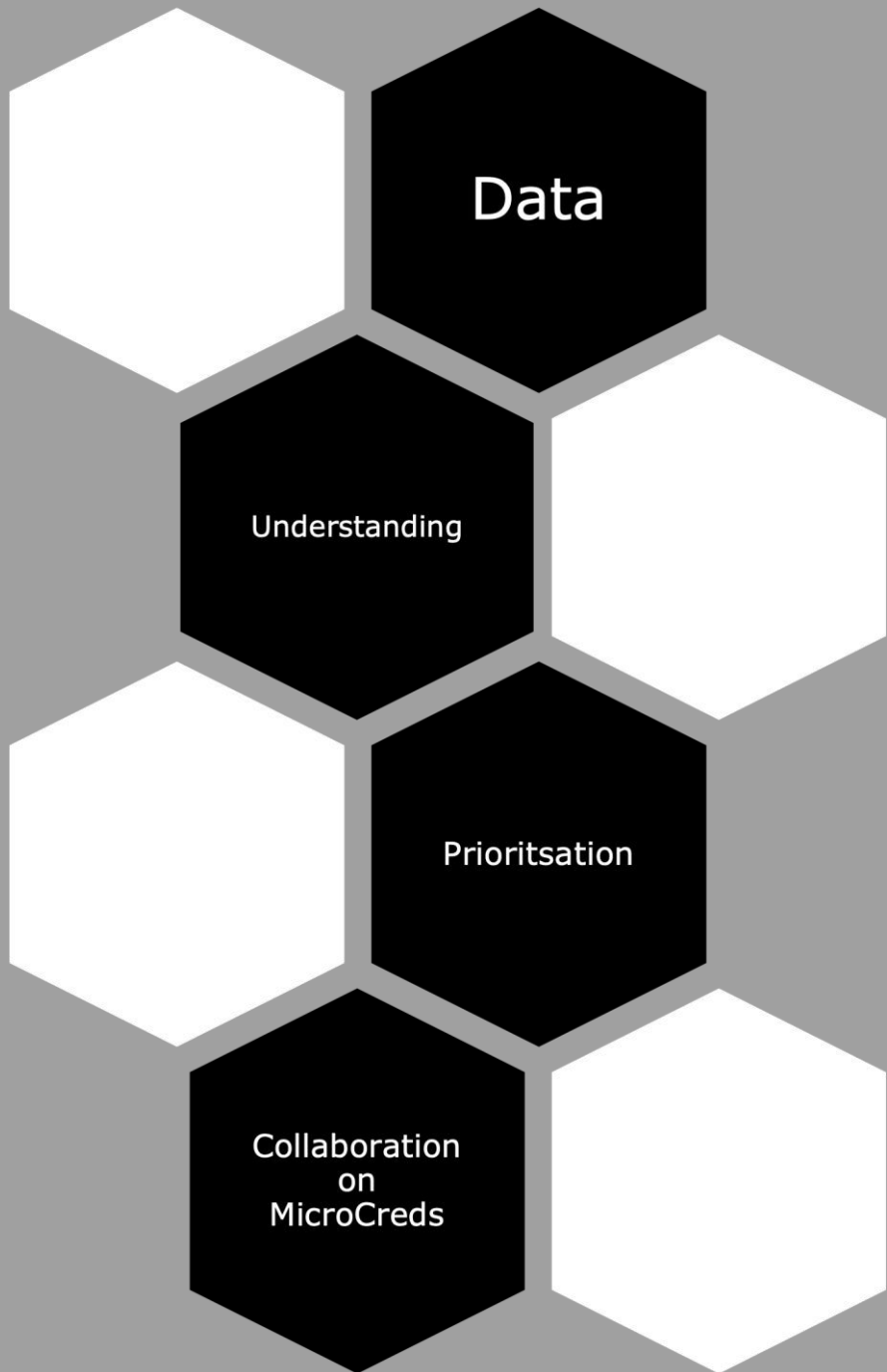
Short cycle and co-creation, quality enhancement

Opportunities for Interoperability with national and EUROPASS (European learning model)

Sectoral protocols

NFQ



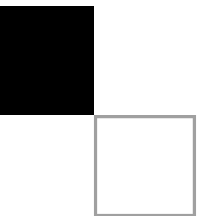


MicroCred Innovate

Zero Carbon
(18 January 2022)

Digital Transformation
(4 May 2022)

SME Productivity
(28 June 2022)



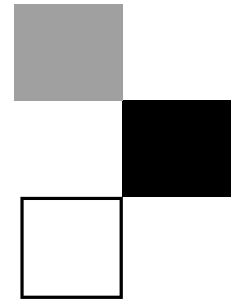
11 standard elements

1	Identification of Learner	7	Notional workload to achieve LO (in ECTS where possible)
2	Title of Micro-Credential	8	Level and Cycle of the Learning Experience
3	Country/Region of the Issuer	9	Type of Assessment
4	Awarding Body	10	Form of Participation in the Learning Activity
5	Date of Issuing	11	Type of Quality Assurance
6	Learning Outcomes		

Quality Assurance Agency, complementary role

QQI quality remit covers:

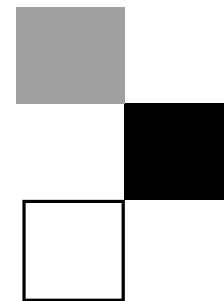
- Programmes of education and training, research and related services
- Establish Core QA guidelines which are applicable to all types of providers.
- Institutional review covers the programme development and review process
- The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA [ESG_2015.pdf \(enqa.eu\)](#) (which refer to programme assessment and other factors) are incorporated into the terms of reference for QQI institutional level review of HEIs in Ireland and the suite of statutory QA guidelines
- The Irish Register of Qualifications (IRQ) is a legislative resource that is managed by the agency. It provides public confirmation of the formal, technical relationship between a qualification and the NFQ
- Sectoral protocols are in place between QQI and HEIs for the inclusion of the HEI qualification in the NFQ at the required level
- Annual Quality Reports to QQI provide us with annual updates on the internal quality assurance systems and new developments in the HEIs
- QQI has adapted its validation procedures so that the microcredentials offered in the private sector can lead to QQI Awards, at a minimum size of 5 ECTS. [Case study - validation of microcredentials | Quality and Qualifications Ireland \(qqi.ie\)](#)



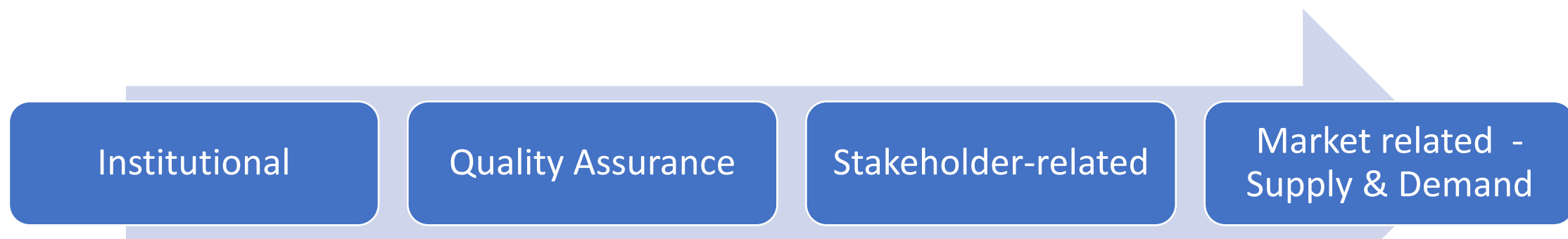
**MICRO
CREDS**



Next Phase – 4 Key Challenge Areas

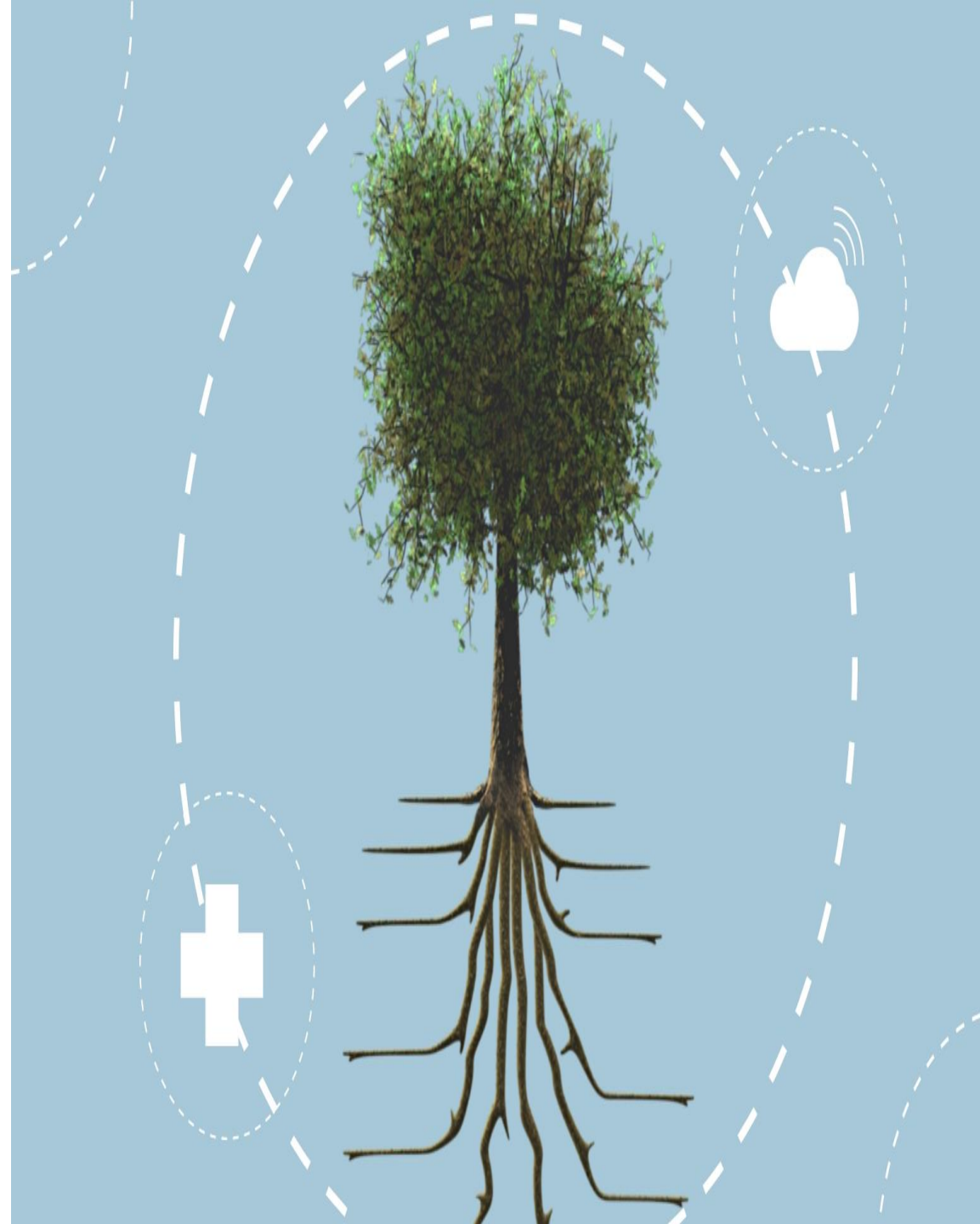


- Ireland – microcosm of Europe
- Particular Regulatory Framework – Group of HEIs that come under the QQI our national quality agency & Universities who are autonomous



Next Phase – Challenges

- Internal institutional processes – systems, registration, collation of info.
- Inter-institutional processes and recognition – to support MCs
- Stackability
- Quality Assurance – rigorous process to ensure that standards are maintained
- Provision – diversity across National Framework of Qualifications – volume and diversity



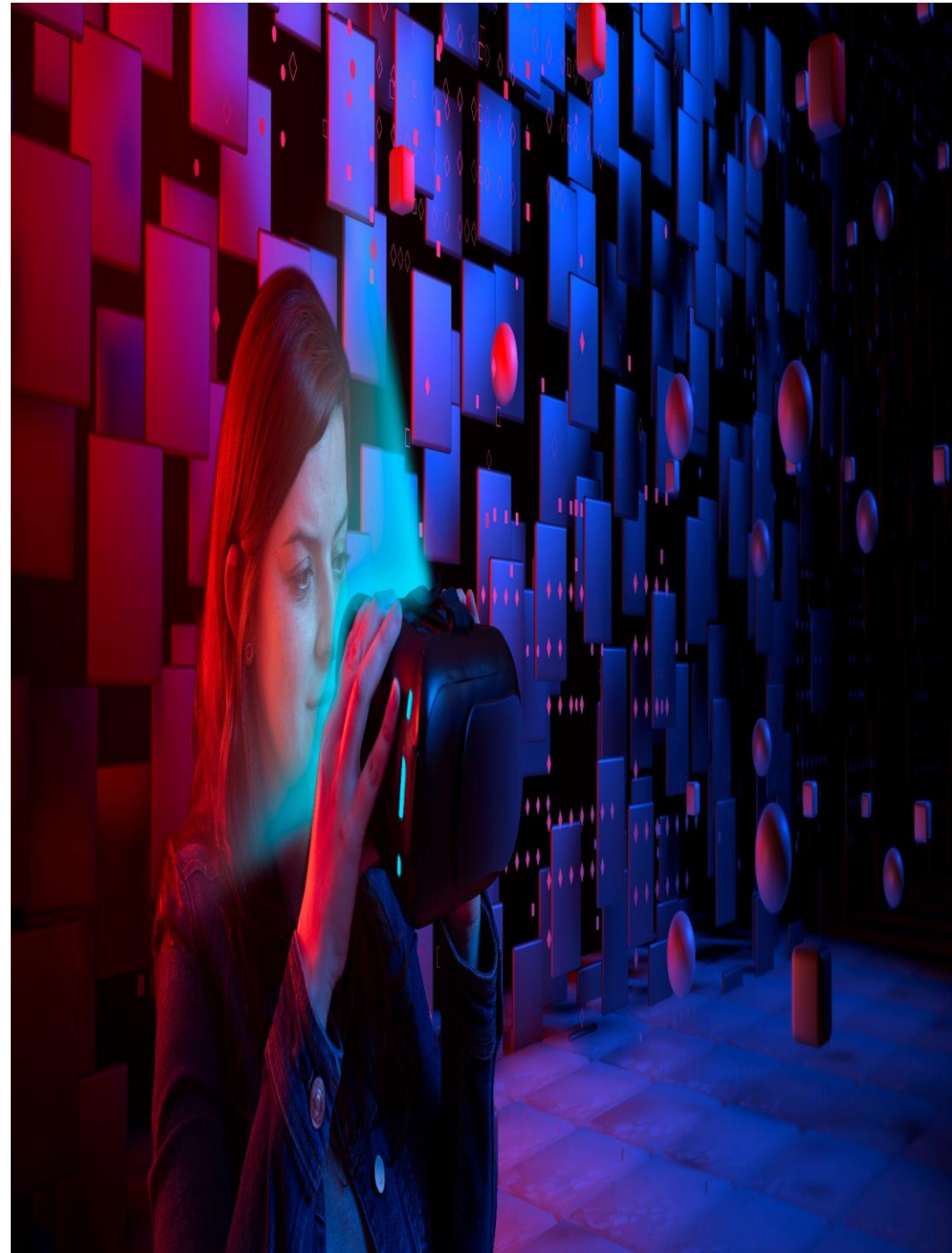
Next Phase – Challenges

- Sea-change from macro to micro offerings for most HEIs,
 - Processes
 - Registry and QA, T&L, Research Centres & ICT systems
 - Scale
 - Financials
 - Sustainability of processes
- Awareness Raising



Next Phase – Challenges

- Skills gaps meeting the needs of industry and societal stakeholders (EGSFN reports, IDA & Enterprise Ireland, SDGs)
- Value proposition of MCs within a flooded market – quick turn around to react, plan and deliver to the market
- Common language to engage with enterprise
- Training v Academic Credential
- Europass – preparing for portability



Next Phase – Challenges

- Collaboration between HEIs
- Focus on Private sector enterprise needs but opportunities to address and supply Public sector requirements
- Societal and global issues e.g. Green, digital
- Collaboration between DCU & UL on a translator Microcredential for Ukrainian refugees in Ireland – addressing the societal needs impacted by what cannot be planned for but which will support the greater good.





Go raibh maith agaibh
Thank You
Vielen Dank!

Stay Connected with the project



caitriona.nicgiollamhichil@dcu.ie
sarah.brady@ul.ie



www.iua.ie/microcreds



@IUAMicroCreds
#MicroCredsIE



MicroCreds #MicroCredsIE