



ACQF

African Continental
Qualifications Framework

Session 2-2: Global overview of policy developments, key trends, and emerging issues

4th ACQF Forum: Micro-credentials for better
opportunities

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Part of the
Verian Group

Agenda

01 Introduction

02 Micro-credentials: a general view

03 Trends in the micro-credentials landscape

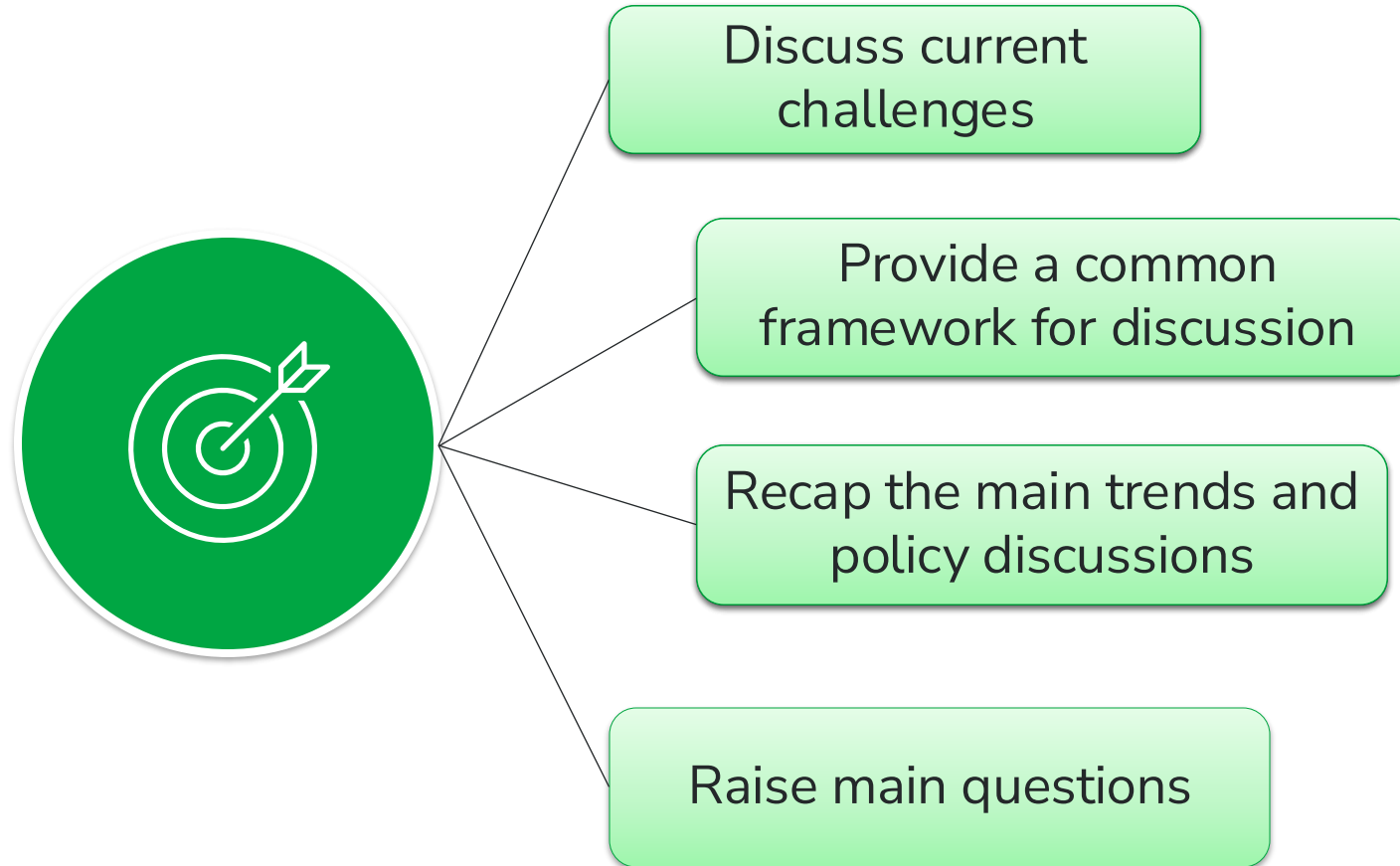
04 Challenges and issues

05 Impact

01

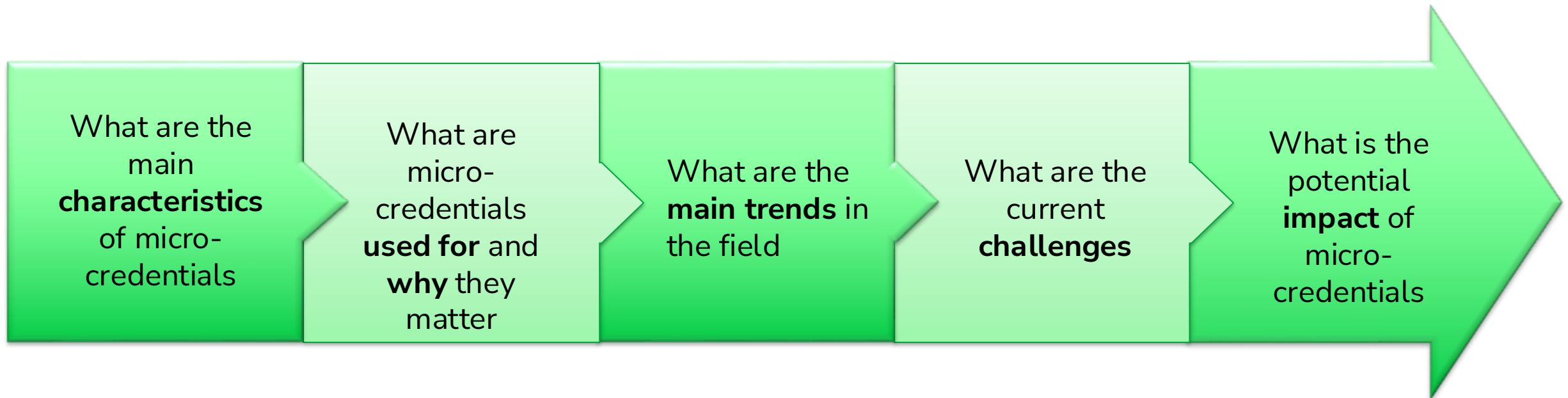
Introduction

Objectives



Micro-credentials

Micro credentials are emerging as a promising response to the changing needs of the education and employment landscape

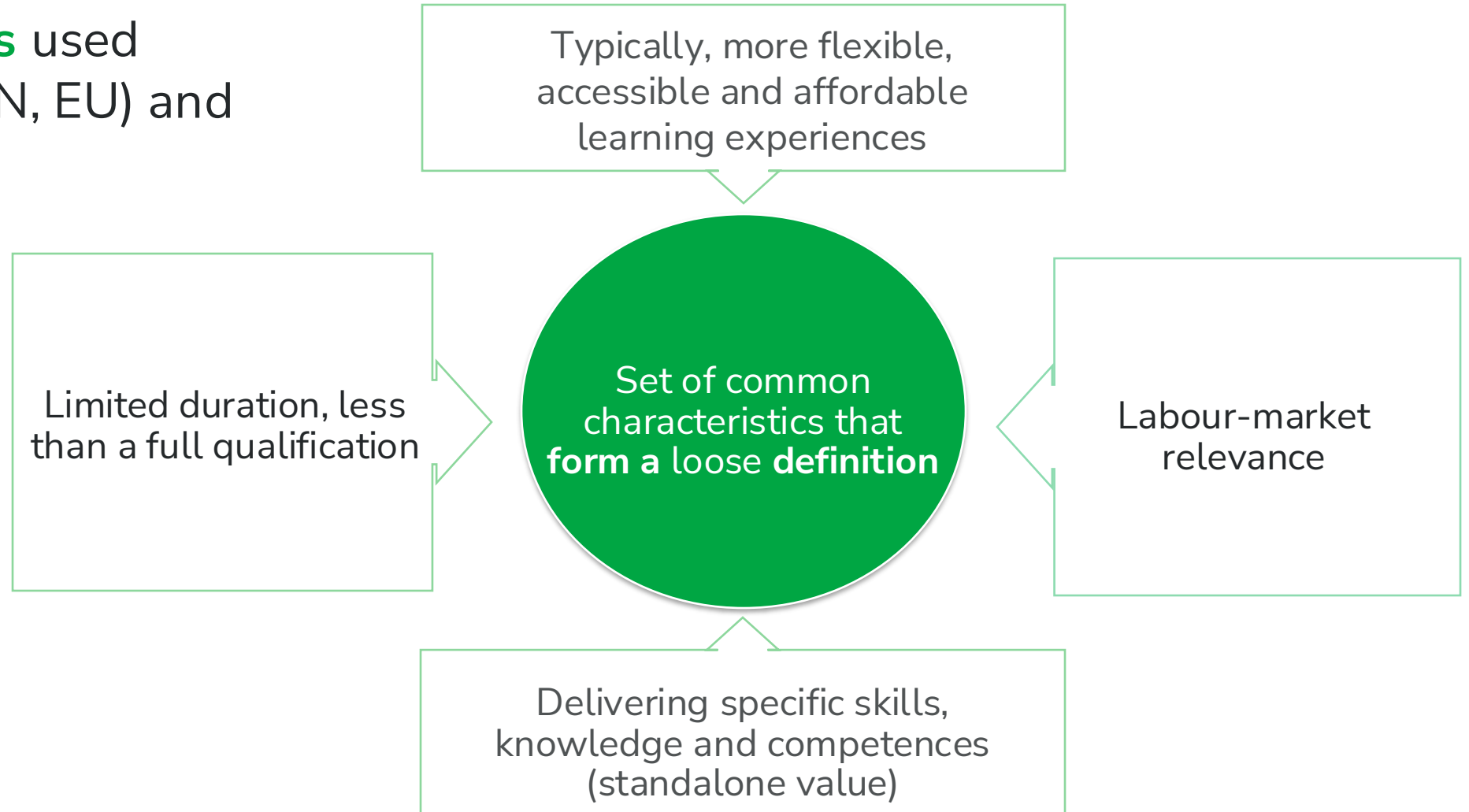


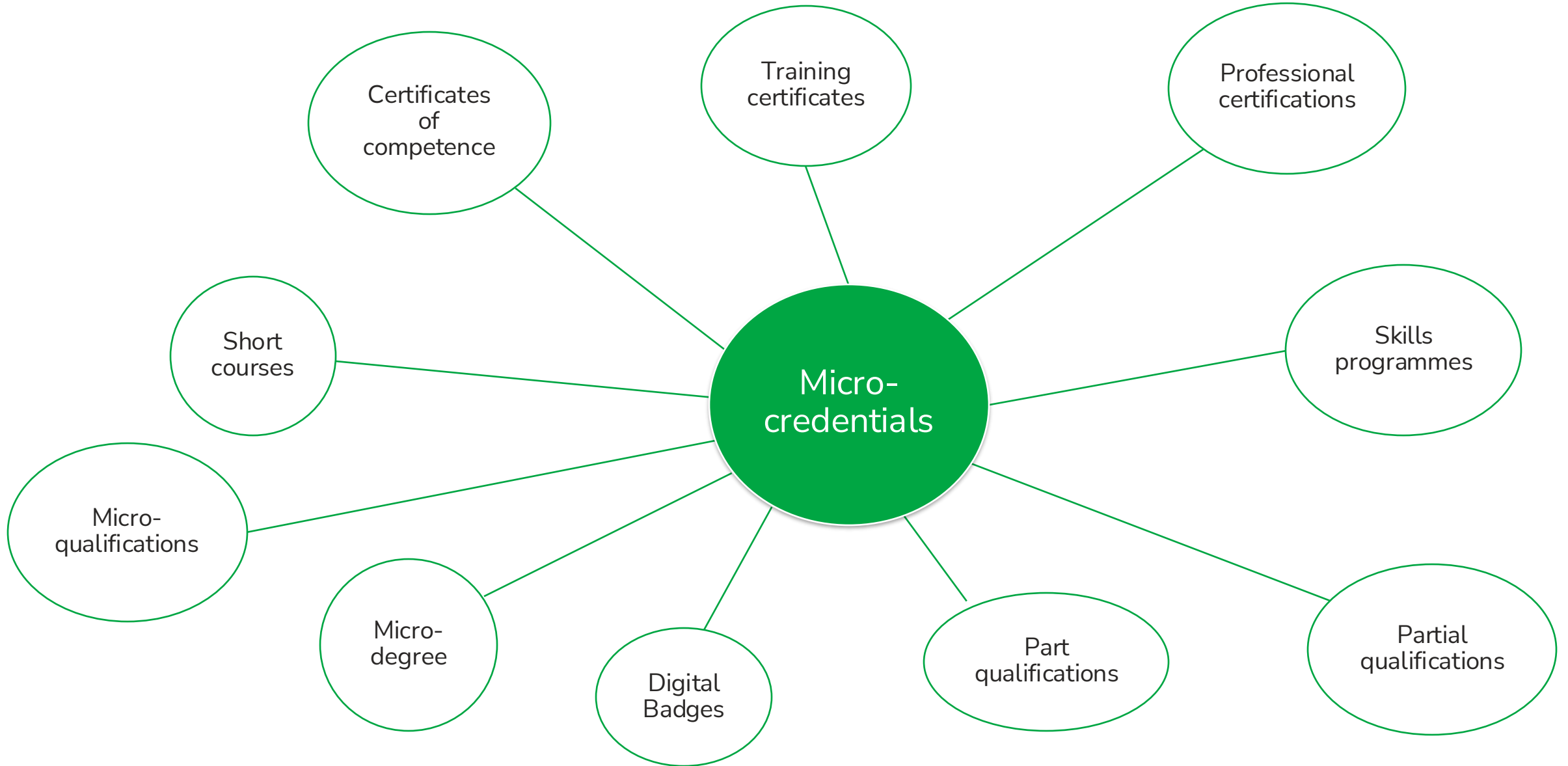
02

A general view of micro-credentials

What are micro-credentials?

Various definitions used globally (OECD, UN, EU) and nationally





Micro-credentials:

Within formal settings (HE, VET)

More likely to be accredited and quality assured

Modularisation of full programmes: e.g. in HE and VET, it can serve as component to larger qualifications

Learning outcomes assessed against transparent standards

Within non-formal settings (prof. bodies, industries, training providers)

Professional development: targeting skills relevant to the workplace

Industry partnerships: collaborations between providers and industry stakeholders to provide relevant training offering

More flexible and accessible, catering to professionals

Lifelong learning

Within informal settings

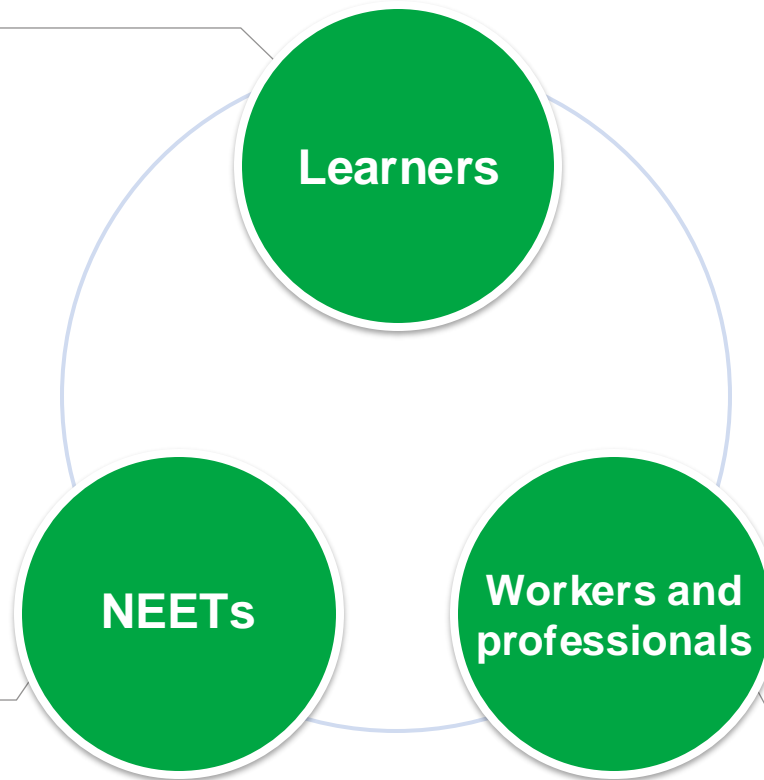
RPL and micro-credentials

Badges as post-hoc proof of learning experience

End users: recipients in focus

Formalise prior learning experience, work towards full or larger qualifications
Supplement qualifications

Market relevant skills to improve employability
Accessibility of learning opportunities



Upskilling and reskilling
Acquire new competences quickly
Valuable training option
Labour market mobility

Providers of micro-credentials

Education and training providers

Public providers: integration into formal systems, QA

Private providers: some are more outside of the formal E&T system

Curriculum innovation; lifelong learning initiatives, partnerships

Teacher CPD

Labour market actors

Employer and employee organisations

Workforce development; upskilling and reskilling

Sectors undergoing rapid change

Curriculum innovation; lifelong learning initiatives, partnerships

Other public organisations and NGOs

Public authorities such as public employment services, accreditation agencies, museums, libraries

NGOs working with other providers to offer micro-credentials

Online providers

Credentialing software, online learning platforms; ICT sector

Digital tracking

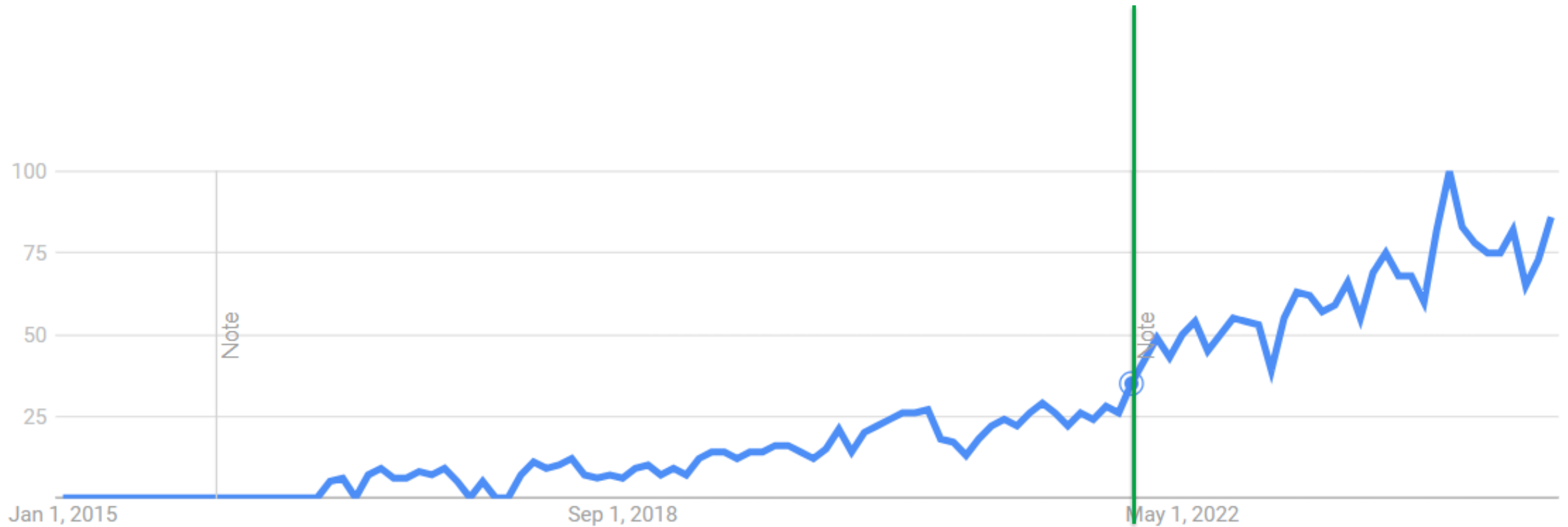
Self paced

03

Trends and developments

Micro-credentials: still trending?

Interest over time ?

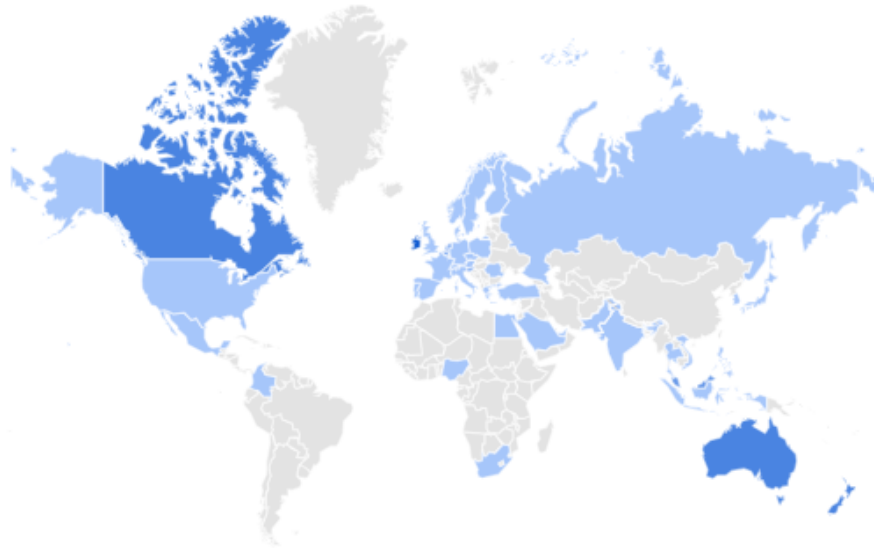


Source: ACQF Presentation by Prof. Mark Brown 2022; Own analysis; Both extracted from Google Trends

Where did interest grow?

Interest by region ?

Region ▾



1	Ireland	100	<div style="width: 100%;"><div style="width: 100%;"></div></div>
2	Australia	60	<div style="width: 60%;"><div style="width: 60%;"></div></div>
3	Canada	60	<div style="width: 60%;"><div style="width: 60%;"></div></div>
4	New Zealand	60	<div style="width: 60%;"><div style="width: 60%;"></div></div>
5	Malaysia	40	<div style="width: 40%;"><div style="width: 40%;"></div></div>

Include low search volume regions

< Showing 1-5 of 44 regions >

Understanding policy developments around the world

Policy focus areas

Develop and extract purpose(s) micro-credentials should serve

Standardisation, recognition and integration with various education and training systems

Quality assurance

Cross-border recognition and harmonisation

Lifelong learning and RPL

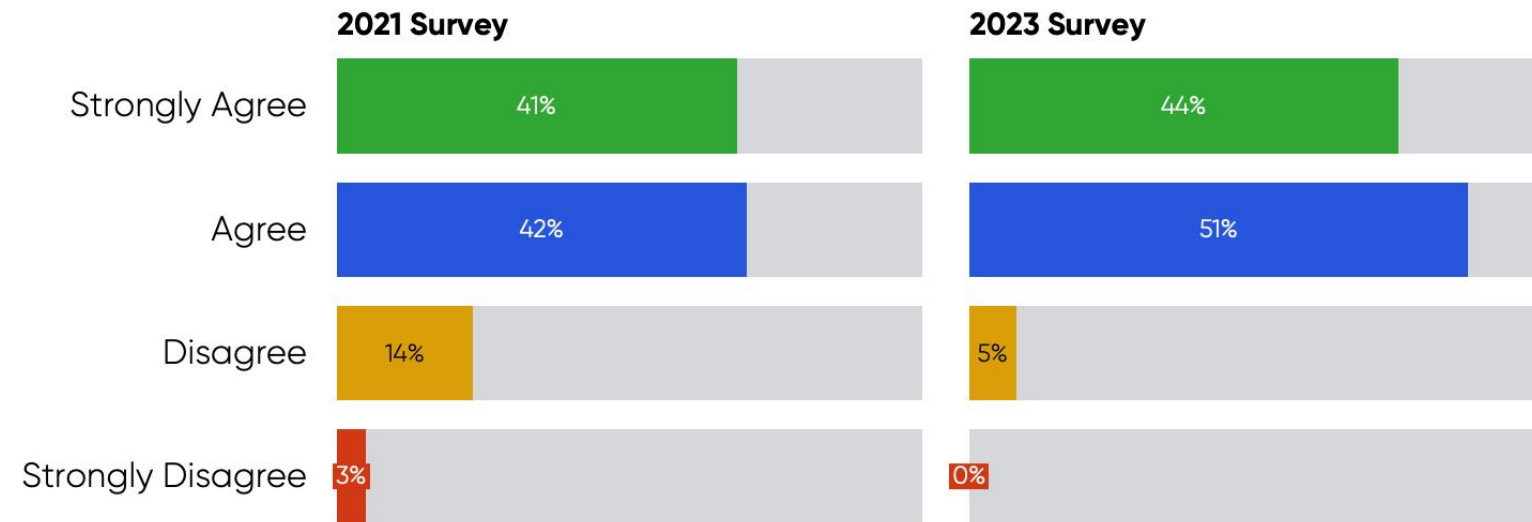
Digital transformation

Recent trends

HOLONIQ. GLOBAL IMPACT INTELLIGENCE

Overall, micro-credentials more likely to be integrated into degree programs, but slightly less conviction in 2023 than in the 2021 survey

In the future, micro-credentials are likely to be integrated within most university degree programs.



Source: HoloniQ, March 2023. n = 389 across 2021 and 2023 surveys.

Source: <https://www.holoniq.com/notes/micro-credentials-survey-2023-insights>

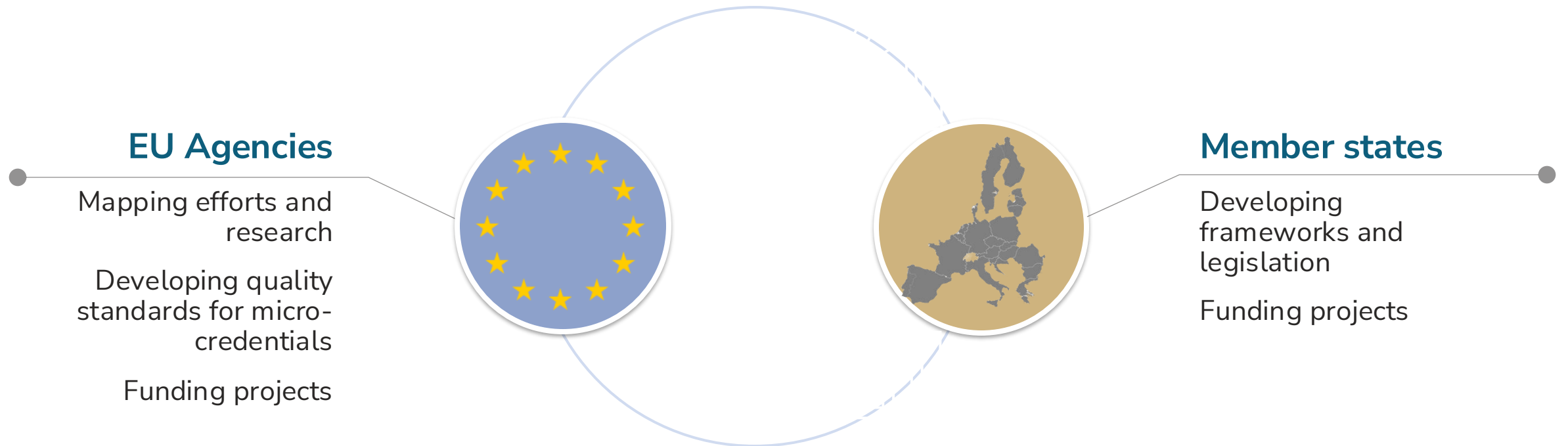
Global policy landscape

Supra-national institutions <i>UNESCO, OECD, EU</i>	Other bodies	National efforts
Developing guidelines and studies, harmonisation	Online platforms: MOOC consortiums, Coursera	Integration into different education and training sectors
Integration into policy surveys	NGOs and civil organisations: Credential Engine, eCampusOntario	Integration into NQFs
Data collection	Open access resources	Incentives for adoption
Peer reviews, collaboration	Awareness raising	Funding support
Funding support	Collaboration between different stakeholders	Individual learning accounts

Regional highlights: EU

EU Recommendation on Micro-Credentials (2022):

- Adopted to establish a common European approach to micro-credentials, ensuring that they are transparent, quality-assured, and portable across borders and sectors.
- Encourages Member States to align their micro-credential offerings with a set of standards to promote mutual recognition and trust.



Good practices around the world

- **Pioneers in establishing MC frameworks:**
 - New Zealand: maintains a national online register, requires MCs to be referenced to the national qualification framework, established QA guidelines.
 - Spain: formally integrated MCs into VET and HE systems, developed QA procedures, allows for accumulation of stackable micro-credentials.
 - Ontario, Canada: integrated into postsecondary education, dedicated funds to develop MCs, public portal.
 - Australia: developed a national framework to provide consistency, funding support to develop the MCs environment, aligned with NQF (although not included)
 - Multiple African countries, including Mauritius, Kenya, Eswatini or South Africa, have integrated micro-credentials (or part qualifications) into their qualification frameworks.

Good practices around the world

- **Industry collaboration and recipient engagement:** eCampus Ontario
- **Funding models:** Singapore, Lithuania and France demonstrate innovative models by providing learners with yearly stipends in learning accounts for upskilling. Many countries provide funding for development of MC and collaboration between providers and industry representatives.
- **Regional collaboration:** PoMiSa (Potential of Micro-credentials in Southern Africa).

04

Challenges and issues

Challenges ahead - 1

- Lack of transparent and common definitions
- Stakeholders are still unsure or unaware of micro-credentials and its benefits
- Micro-credentials are not yet adapted at scale
- Complexity and variety of micro-credentials offerings
- Recognition of micro-credentials



Challenges ahead - 2

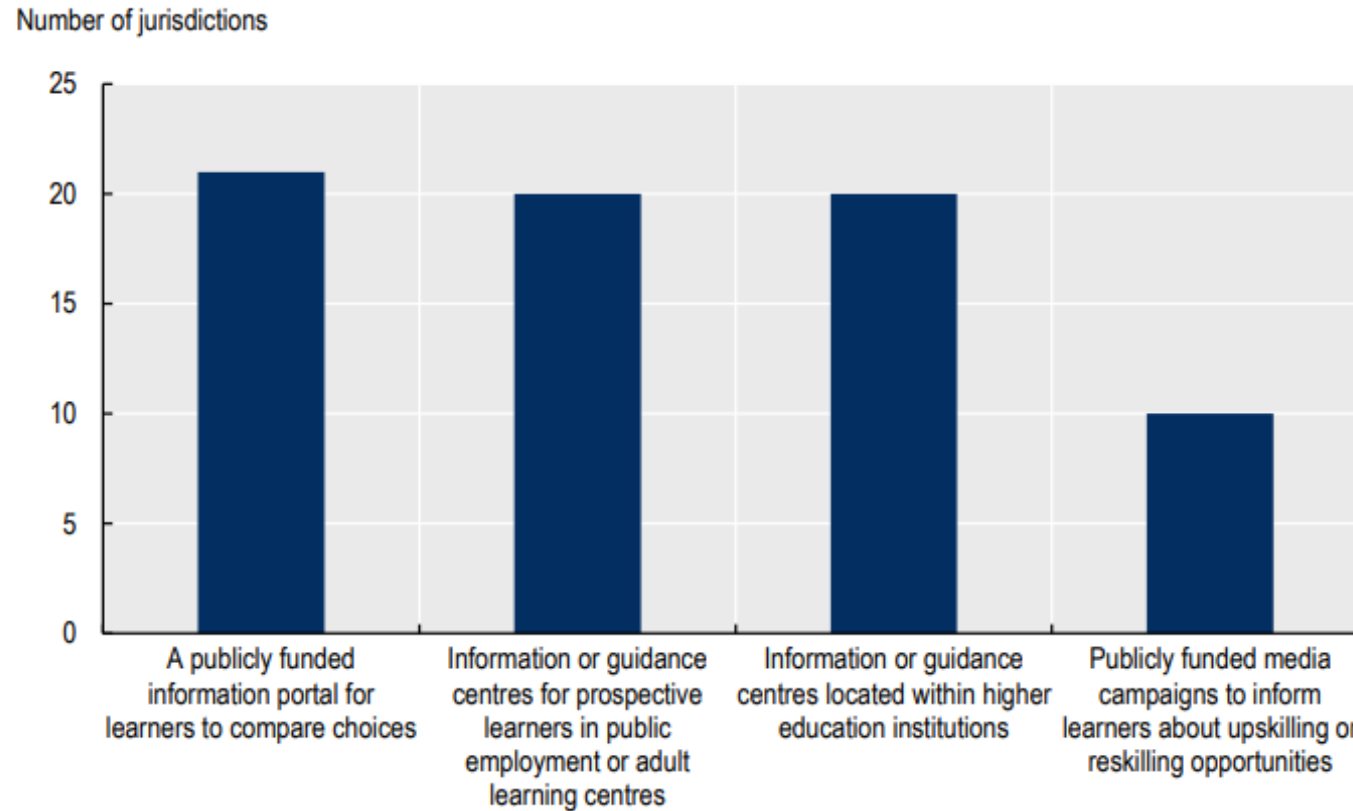
- **Micro-credentials may shift focus from holistic education and affect the use of full qualifications**
- **Micro-credentials may not reach vulnerable / disadvantaged learners as expected**
- **Limited funding**
- **Evidence gaps, lack of systematic data collection**
- **Sufficient trust in micro-credentials**
- **Lack of digital solutions for validation, recognition and storage of micro-credentials**

05

Impact

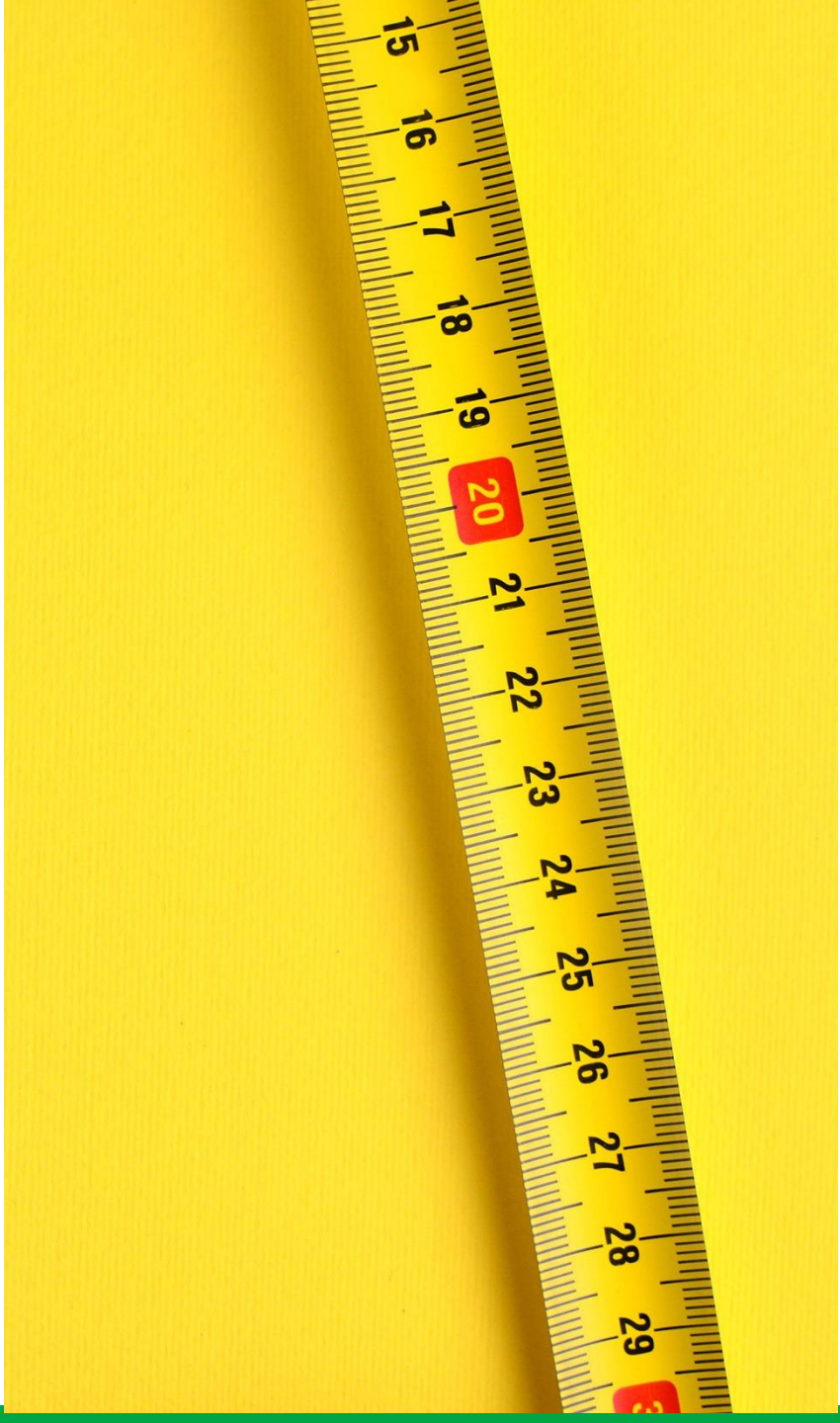
Figure 2.4. Provision of information and guidance to prospective learners

In response to the question “Which means are available for prospective learners to discover higher education reskilling or upskilling opportunities?”



Note: Total responding jurisdictions: 29

Source: OECD Higher Education Policy Survey 2022



Impact: available evidence

- Globally, **90% of students believe earning such credentials increases their chances of securing a job** post-graduation
- **Employers** are increasingly valuing skills-based hiring. About **88% agree that micro-credentials strengthen a candidate's job application**, and many are moving toward hiring practices that prioritize specific skills over traditional qualifications
- **71% HE leaders** think alternative credentials" could help them achieve institutional revenue and enrolment goals. 60 percent considered credential initiatives "totally" or "very" aligned with their institutions' strategic plans
- **Large institutions** (15,000 or more students) were the most likely to adopt MC (60 percent), compared to small (48 percent) and medium schools (46 percent)
- Seventy-nine percent of respondents considered **labour and occupational data** "extremely" or "very important" in forming new credential initiatives.

Impact: available evidence - 2

- **Main purpose:** as a top-up to a qualification to demonstrate specific skills (52% of employees; 38% of students and adult learners, 38% of unemployed). Other purposes: personal development, job and career promotion.
- **65% of unemployed individuals think that credentials could help them stand out** when applying for a job (out of those who have engaged previously with MC). The same share is 36% in case of those who did not engage with micro-credentials before.
- 55.5% of the employees, 47% of the unemployed and 72% of students think that **micro-credentials could help them get into further studies** (have not engaged with MC). In contrast, 37% of employees, 27% of unemployed and 41% of students which engaged with MC think that it helps in further studies.
- **Top added value:** improve competitiveness of the company (61%, for employees); respond to the needs of learners for specific education and training opportunities (69%, orgs representing VET providers) and respond to the needs of employers for specific education and training for current or future employees (67%, orgs representing VET providers)

06

Discussion

Discussion points

Potential challenges and opportunities

What are the main challenges in your country to the broader adoption of micro-credentials, especially for different stakeholders like educators, employers, and learners?

What would be the main purposes of micro-credentials in your national systems? How can we leverage micro-credentials to open new pathways for lifelong learning and professional growth?

Looking ahead: the future of micro-credentials

What future developments could enhance the role of micro-credentials in education and the job market?

How can conferences like this one contribute to shaping a clearer and more cohesive direction for micro-credential policies and practices?

Thank you

Obrigado

Merci

