



CEDEFOP

European Centre for the Development
of Vocational Training



Microcredentials for VET and labour market The EU perspective

Session 4: 4th ACQF Forum,
Microcredentials for better opportunities,
Seychelles

13 November 2024

Defining microcredentials

'Micro-credential' means the record of the learning outcomes that a learner has acquired following a small volume of learning. These learning outcomes will have been assessed against transparent and clearly defined criteria. Learning experiences 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 stand-alone or combined into larger credentials. They are underpinned by quality assurance following agreed standards in the relevant sector or area of activity.

(European Commission, 2022)



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Microcredentials for VET and labour market learning

Three key objectives

Mapping microcredentials in European LM-related education, training and learning
Microcredentials and evolving qualifications systems

Microcredentials and the added value for end-users

New study (2024-27)

Deepening on MCs: quality, labour market sector relevance and inclusion

Novelty or old wine with new label?

- MCs are a **growing phenomenon** - address limitations of formal Qs to **timely respond to labour market needs**
- Microcredentials are promising, **but getting things right is a balancing act**
- Emerging mostly in areas such as **ICT, engineering, manufacturing, and construction**, but also in sectors such as **hospitality, human health, and social work**

(a) Lack of **adequate and transparent QA standards** (b) **How learning outcomes are assessed and documented** (c) More empirical data from **LM sectors** are needed (d) Comprehensive **information and guidance** about microcredentials is missing

Microcredentials discussion at national policy level

Policy discussions
at an initial stage

BE-FL – BE-FR –
BU – CY- CZ –
DK – FR – DE -
EL

Advanced policy
discussions

NL – PL

Legislation or draft
regulations
already introduced

EE – IE – LV –
ES - SK

Indicative
examples
(2022)

Indications that system or broader policy developments ease the expansion of microcredentials

Microcredentials as part of qualifications systems

QUALIFICATION

Linking modularisation to microcredentials

Modularisation is very common in **adult learning**; modules are often considered similar to microcredentials. Indicative examples: BE-FL, BE-FR, CZ, DK, HU,

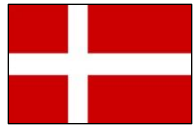
In HR, the term '**micro-qualification**' (*'mikrokvakificacija'*) was introduced in the 2021 Adult Education Act. Compiled units of learning outcomes (micro-qualifications) lead to short training programmes and/or qualifications at EQF/NQF levels 2-4.

In IE, the **modular nature** of the QS accommodates **free-standing qualifications** and qualifications as small as five credits; credentials smaller than this can be used as stepping stones into qualifications on the NFQ by being aggregated and used in recognition of prior learning.

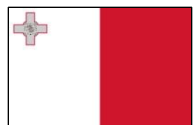
Opening up qualifications frameworks to microcredentials



The NSK vocational qualifications could be considered a type of MCs, as they fit European Commission's definition of MCs.



The DKQF includes qualifications awarded outside formal education and training, including microcredentials.



Some MQF awards could be considered as a type of MCs.

13 countries in EU have reported that at least a type of microcredential is part of their framework (Source: [European Inventory of NQFs](#) and [NQFs online tool](#))

- 6 countries are currently exploring the possibility of including microcredentials in their frameworks

Skills and training in EU

- Focus on **green; circular economy and waste management** in companies
- *Amazon, Cisco, Google, IBM, Microsoft* and other technology companies are actively providing alternative credential programmes focusing on **IT, in emerging technology** areas, including **AI** and **cybersecurity**
- **Industrial cleaning training** offered at different EQF levels
- **METIS4SKILLS** a Brussels-based VET provider operating in the microelectronics sector across 13 countries



Reasons for selecting the manufacturing sector

- ❖ **A broad economic sector** – one of the largest and most dominant sectors in the EU, which employ a large portion of the EU working population .
- ❖ It possesses **different development trajectories** and **skills systems**.
- ❖ Historically the sector aims at **different demographics** for its workforce.
- ❖ Manufacturing has VET systems with **different starting points and trends** between countries.
- ❖ The manufacturing and service industries demand **continuous learning**, given that products and working conditions **are subject to rapid change**



Information collected (via a template) in selected examples in manufacturing

(a) a title; (b) a provider or awarding body; (c) learning outcomes (LOs); (d) duration and pace; (e) notional workload or credits; (f) type of assessment; (g) option to accumulate and combine; (h) link to European qualifications framework (EQF) and national qualifications frameworks (NQF); (i) link to occupational standards; (j) mode of delivery; (k) format of certification; (l) prerequisites needed to start a learning activity; (m) target group; (n) country or region where available; (o) purpose; (p) costs and funding options; (q) additional information where and if relevant

Main characteristics of microcredentials in the manufacturing and retail sectors

Sector	Title of microcredential	Location	Workload	Link to ECTS or ECVET specified	Mode of delivery	Highly targeted/specialised types of training that are designed around specific occupational/professional	Focus on new and emerging topics and technologies	YES	YES
Manufacturing	Safety procedures in medical processes	France	12 modules 17 days	NO	In person				
Manufacturing	Quality management system and welding coordination	Denmark	22.5 hours, 3 days	NO	In person				
Manufacturing	International Welding Engineer (IWE)	International (41 countries)	448 hours	ECVET	person/blended				
Manufacturing	International Welding Practitioner (IWP)	International (41 countries)	150 hours	ECVET	person/blended			YES	YES
Manufacturing		Germany, France, Italy, Spain, UK, Portugal and Turkey.	60-70 hours	NO	Online/blended				
Manufacturing		Austria	1 month (fulltime)	NO	In person				
Manufacturing		Malta	125 hours	ECVET	In person			YES	YES
Industrial		Czechia	NS	NO	In person			NO	NS

Highly targeted/specialised types of training that are designed around specific occupational/professional

Focus on new and emerging topics and technologies

Mode of delivery differs; it can be in-person training, online or blended.

Microcredentials often describe learning outcomes. The remaining either do not mention their LOs or present them in the form of content description

Pouliou, A. (2024). Exploring the emergence of microcredentials in vocational education and training (VET).

Four scenarios for microcredentials

Scenario 1: Supply-driven microcredentials (as part of formal education) for further learning

Scenario 2: Supply-driven microcredentials for LM entry and job setting (professional credentials)

Scenario 3: Demand-driven microcredentials (examples of enterprises/sectors)

Scenario 4: Microcredentials for vulnerable groups /groups at risk (upskilling/reskilling)

Source: Pouliou, A. (2024)


Microcredentials in Europe Publications

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BRIEFING NOTE

MICROCREDENTIALS

STRIVING TO COMBINE CREDIBILITY AND AGILITY



Sweeping changes in economies and jobs require education and training to offer more flexible learning pathways and valid credentials

Microcredentials hold promise for connecting people's skillsets with labour market demand in a rapidly changing world of work. They have proliferated in recent years across economic sectors and education levels, reinforcing European and national efforts to understand and develop them better (1). They can increase the provision of labour-market-relevant vocational education and training (VET), supporting national, regional and sectoral upskilling and reskilling strategies, offering learners targeted training for better employment prospects, and helping employers improve employee retention and productivity. They support the modularisation of qualifications and the validation of prior learning, enabling the inclusion of the most vulnerable and lifelong learning at all levels. However, significant policy progress and research is needed to ensure that microcredentials offer end-users real value. Cedefop has investigated the evolving purposes, roles and effects of microcredentials in relation to European qualifications systems, the preconditions for users to have trust in them, and the support users need to engage with and benefit from them (2).

(1) Cedefop research on microcredentials. See also Cedefop's 2022 briefing note *Are microcredentials becoming a big deal?*

(2) See Cedefop's first, second and third report on this most recent strand of work.

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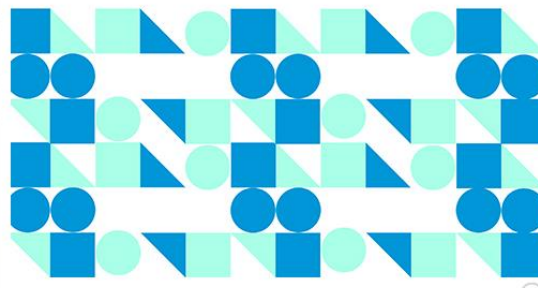
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Research paper

Microcredentials for labour market education and training

First look at mapping microcredentials in European labour-market-related education, training and learning: take-up, characteristics and functions



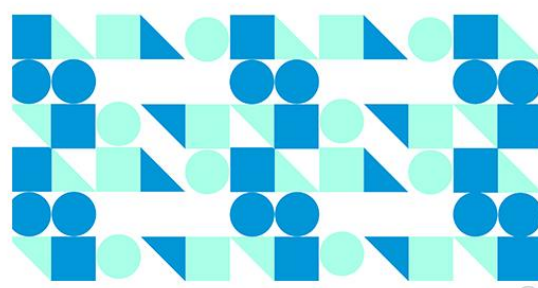
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Research paper

Microcredentials for labour market education and training

Microcredentials and evolving qualifications systems



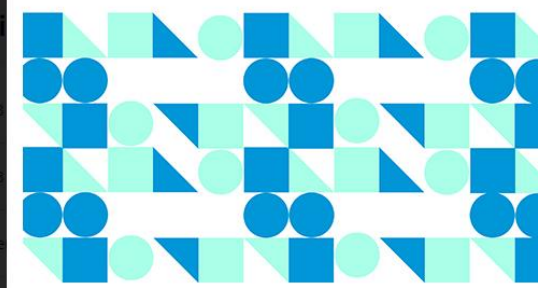
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Research paper

Microcredentials for labour market education and training

The added value for end users



Microcredentials for VET and labour market learning (2024-2027)

Deepening on Microcredentials

- labour market sector relevance
- quality and
- inclusion

3 Main thematic areas

Exploring the diversity of microcredentials: the role of quality assurance and recognition.

Microcredentials and labour market sector relevance

Microcredentials and social inclusion among disadvantaged learners and workers

The findings of the study will support policy makers and stakeholders in better understanding how emerging, demand driven microcredentials can raise equal opportunities to access learning and generate pathways to employment in 21st century.

Exploring the diversity of MCs

- MC landscape is **quite diverse** across national contexts,
- more **clarity and coherence** needed
- MC fall between **formal and non-formal settings** with multiple areas of use, multiple target groups and multiple providers
- **purpose and content** in labour market related education and training?



Quality assurance and recognition

- ❑ Which are the needed elements to consider a microcredential as **'quality assured'**?
- ❑ How can **cooperation, governance and partnership** be ensured so as to give the opportunity to different stakeholders to co-develop, co-design and update microcredentials?
- ❑ How can quality assurance agencies adapt and develop quality assurance **mechanisms** for microcredentials issued by **different types of providers**?
- ❑ Are microcredentials considered tools to **recognise prior learning and competences** or tools to increase accessibility in education and employment?



MCs and labour market sector relevance

- ❑ How can **sector-specific** microcredentials provide targeted learning achievements and learning opportunities?
- ❑ Do microcredentials focus on **occupation/job specific learning outcomes, on transversal skills and competences** or on both of them?
- ❑ To what extent are such microcredentials used by employers in **recruitment procedures** in comparison to full qualifications?



The evolving role of MCs for social inclusion

- ❑ Are microcredentials exchanged and accumulated to **facilitate lifelong and life-wide learning** of **disadvantaged** individuals?
- ❑ Which **supporting measures** can be taken for disadvantaged end users?
- ❑ Which **recommendations and implementation guidelines** on microcredentials can be developed to support disadvantaged end users?



Thank you

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Project page

www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/projects/microcredentials-labour-market-education-and-training

Publications

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