



CEDEFOP

European Centre for the Development
of Vocational Training

50
YEARS
SHAPING LEARNING AND
SKILLS IN EUROPE

Deepening on Microcredentials for VET and labour market

Labour market sector relevance, quality and inclusion

22nd ReferNet annual plenary meeting

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 QSs 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



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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,

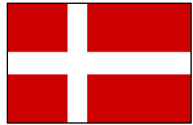
In HR, the term '**micro-qualification**' ('*mikrokvakifikacija*') was introduced in the 2021 Adult Education Act. Compiled units of learning outcomes (micro-qualifications) lead to short training programmes and/or qualifications at EQF/NQF levels 2-4.

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

Four scenarios for microcredentials

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

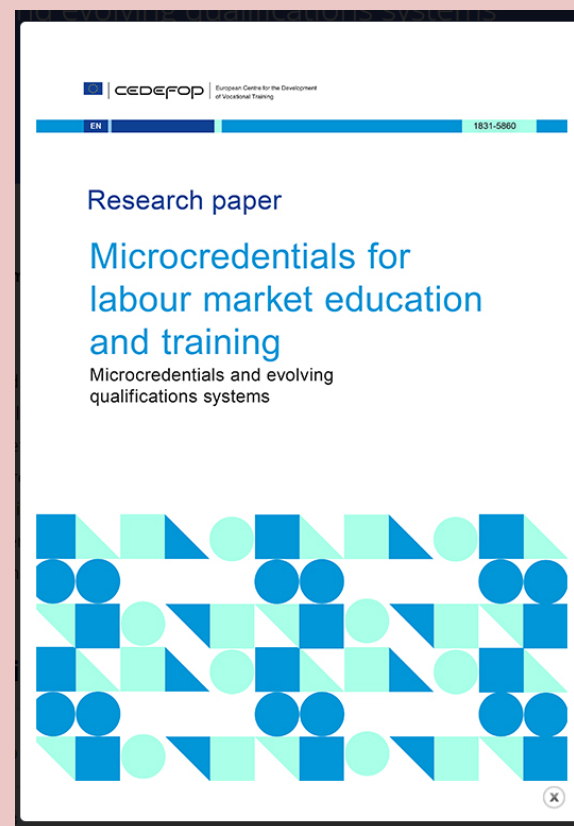
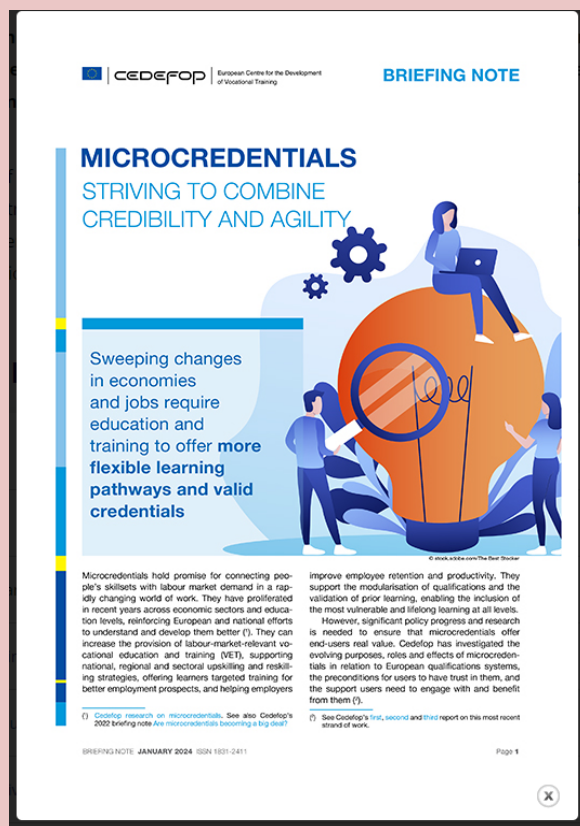
Scenario 2: Supply-driven microcredentials for LM entry and job setting (professional credentials)

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



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?



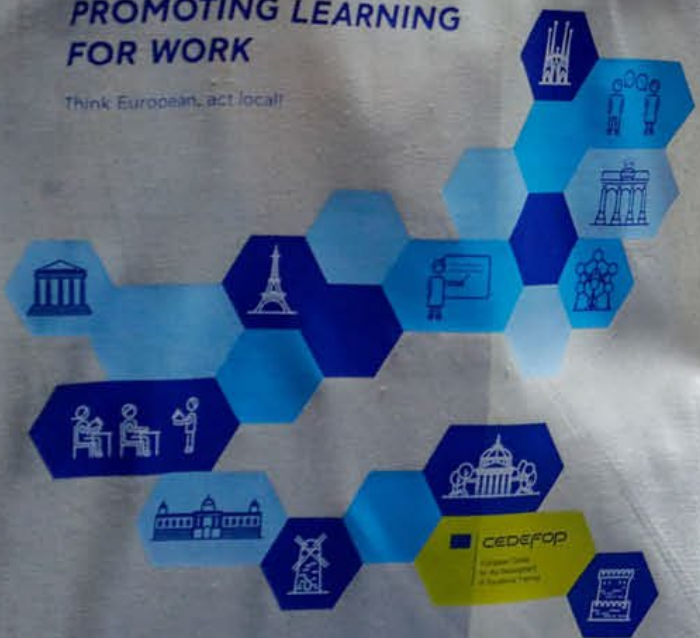
The evolving role of MCs for social inclusion

- ☐ 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?



**PROMOTING LEARNING
FOR WORK**

Think European, act local!



2025 ReferNet Workplan (deliverable 3c)

ReferNet deliverable 3c

- ❖ The **aim** of this exercise is:
- ❖ obtain a **reservoir of case descriptions of (types of) microcredentials offered outside formal education systems** to be used for comparison, analysis and in-depth study on topics related to WA1 (Quality Assurance) and WA3 (Inclusion)
- ❖ To share/disseminate the study's survey in the ReferNet's networks and relevant stakeholders
- ❖ =>To provide a starting point for Cedefop's in-depth country research



MCs offered outside formal ET systems

- ❖ What **types** of MCs fall inside and outside the study?
- ❖ **Relevance** for the LM (companies), further learning (formal E&T providers), individuals
- ❖ Understanding and **characteristics** of **QA systems** in place for MCs
- ❖ **Inclusion** perspectives; role, target groups, tools and supporting mechanisms used/needed (examples)
- ❖ Other **policy initiatives** that can further **support** or **hinder** the use of MCs offered outside formal ET



ReferNet deliverable 3b

Timeline:

- ✓ Presentation of operational questions and guidelines/instructions:

June 2025

- ✓ Estimated person days: **10**
- ✓ Requested deliverable:
 - ❖ Start: **01/07/2025**
 - ❖ End: **30/11/25**



Image by Pexels from Pixabay

Important role of ReferNet (2021)

Thank you

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Project page

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

Publications

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications/6221>

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/projects/microcredentials-labour-market-education-and-training/publications>



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