



The EU's micro-credentials agenda : addressing the skills gap

UnLiON Open Talk

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DG EMPL, 8 March 2022

Reminder of background



Achieving the
EUROPEAN EDUCATION AREA
by 2025



**EUROPEAN SKILLS
AGENDA**

Skills for jobs

July 2020
#EUSkillsAgenda



at least

78%

of the population aged 20
to 64 should be in
employment by 2030

THE EUROPEAN PILLAR OF SOCIAL RIGHTS ACTION PLAN

by 2030



at least

60%

of all adults should
be participating in
training every year by
2030

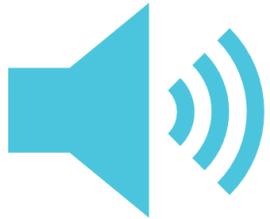
Problems to be tackled

- **Policy challenge:**
growing number of people need to update their knowledge, skills and competences (green and digital transitions, COVID-19 recovery)
- Rising number of micro-credentials globally and in Europe, but:
 - **value** and **understanding** of micro-credentials not always clear
 - wide range of providers (education and training, private sector)
 - questions on **quality, transparency** and **uptake** of micro-credentials between and within countries, between sectors, from one job to another

Why Micro-credentials?



Targeted, relevant learning

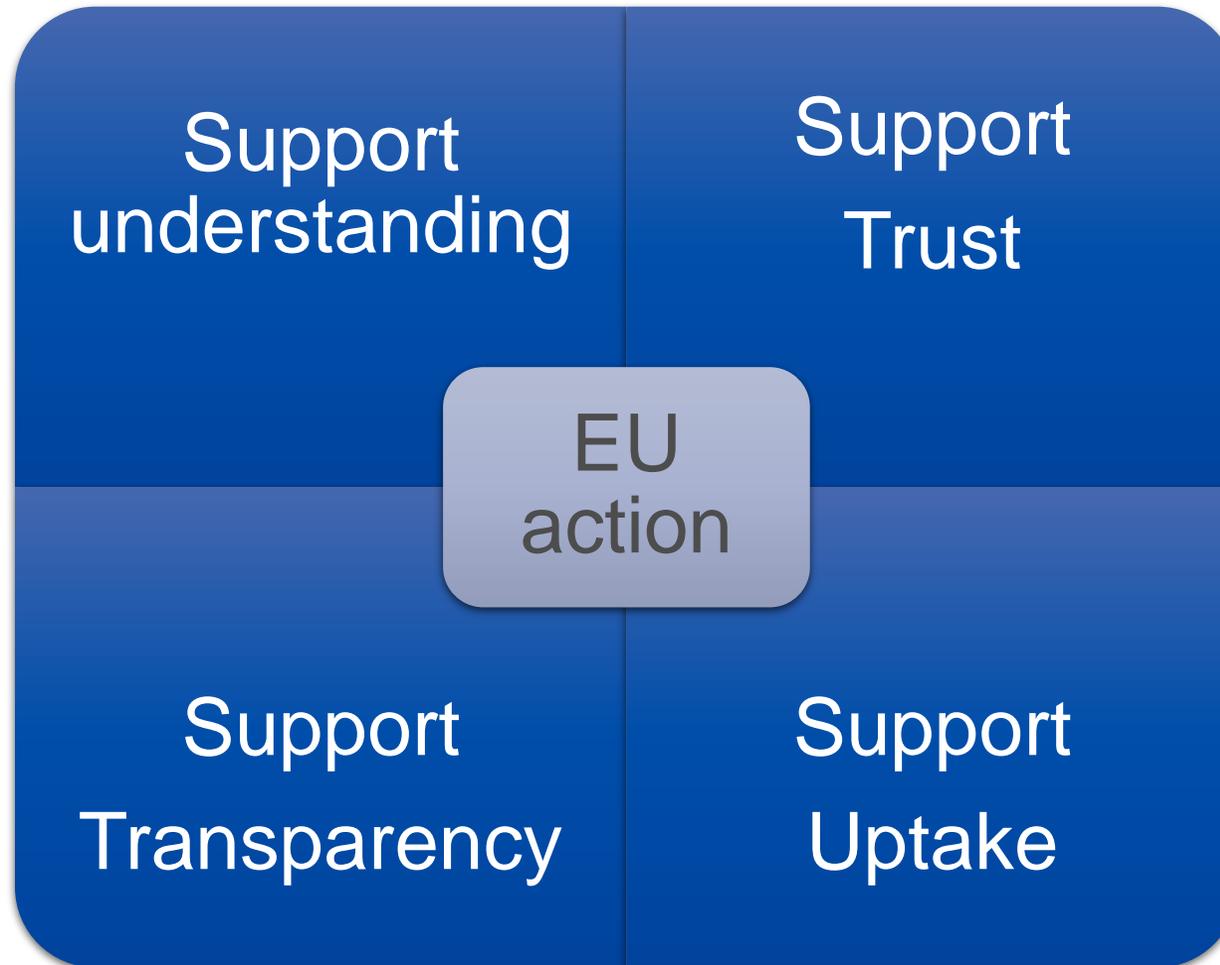


Small volume, short in duration



Flexibility to fit with how people live, learn and work

What is needed to deliver on the potential of micro-credentials?



Objectives

- Enable people to acquire the knowledge, skills and competences they need to **thrive in a changing labour market and society**, so they can benefit fully from both a socially fair recovery from COVID-19 and just transitions to the green and digital economy
- **Support the preparedness of providers** of micro-credentials to enhance the transparency and flexibility of the learning offer in order to empower people to forge personalised learning and career pathways
- **Foster inclusiveness and equal opportunities**, contributing to the achievement of resilience, social fairness and prosperity for all, in a context of demographic change and throughout all phases of economic cycles

Scope

- Micro-credentials are not new. The proposal establishes a **common European approach to the ongoing and emerging provision of micro-credentials**
- Proposal covers micro-credentials, as well as their policies that can support their effective **design** and **use**.
- The proposal does not seek to replace or disrupt existing systems or qualifications
- The proposals sets out a definition and guidance for the design, issuance and description of MCs to facilitate their quality, transparency and uptake

Outline of Proposal

'Building Blocks'

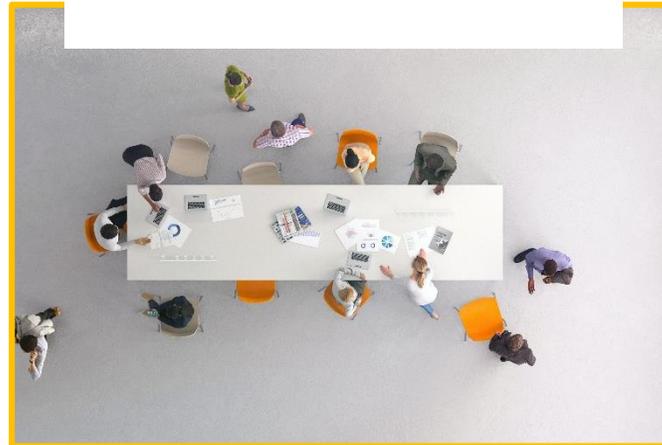


Common Definition of
Micro-credentials

Standard Elements

Principles for Design
and Issuance of Micro-
credentials

Recommendations

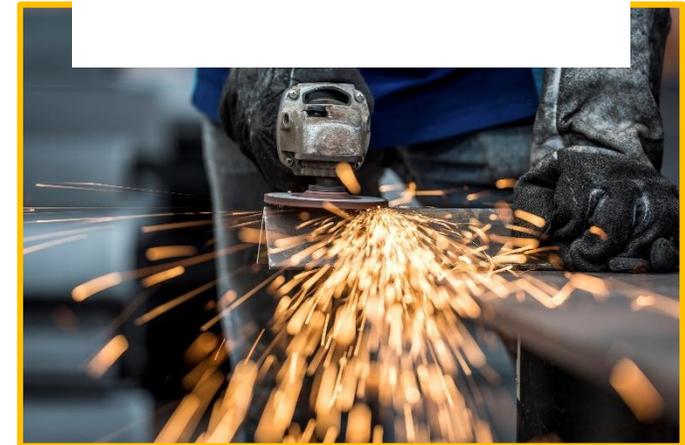


Development of
Ecosystems for MCs

Deliver on the potential
of MCs

Commission Support

Focus



Active Labour Market
Policies

Education, training and
skills policies



Common definition for micro-credentials

Micro-credential means 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.

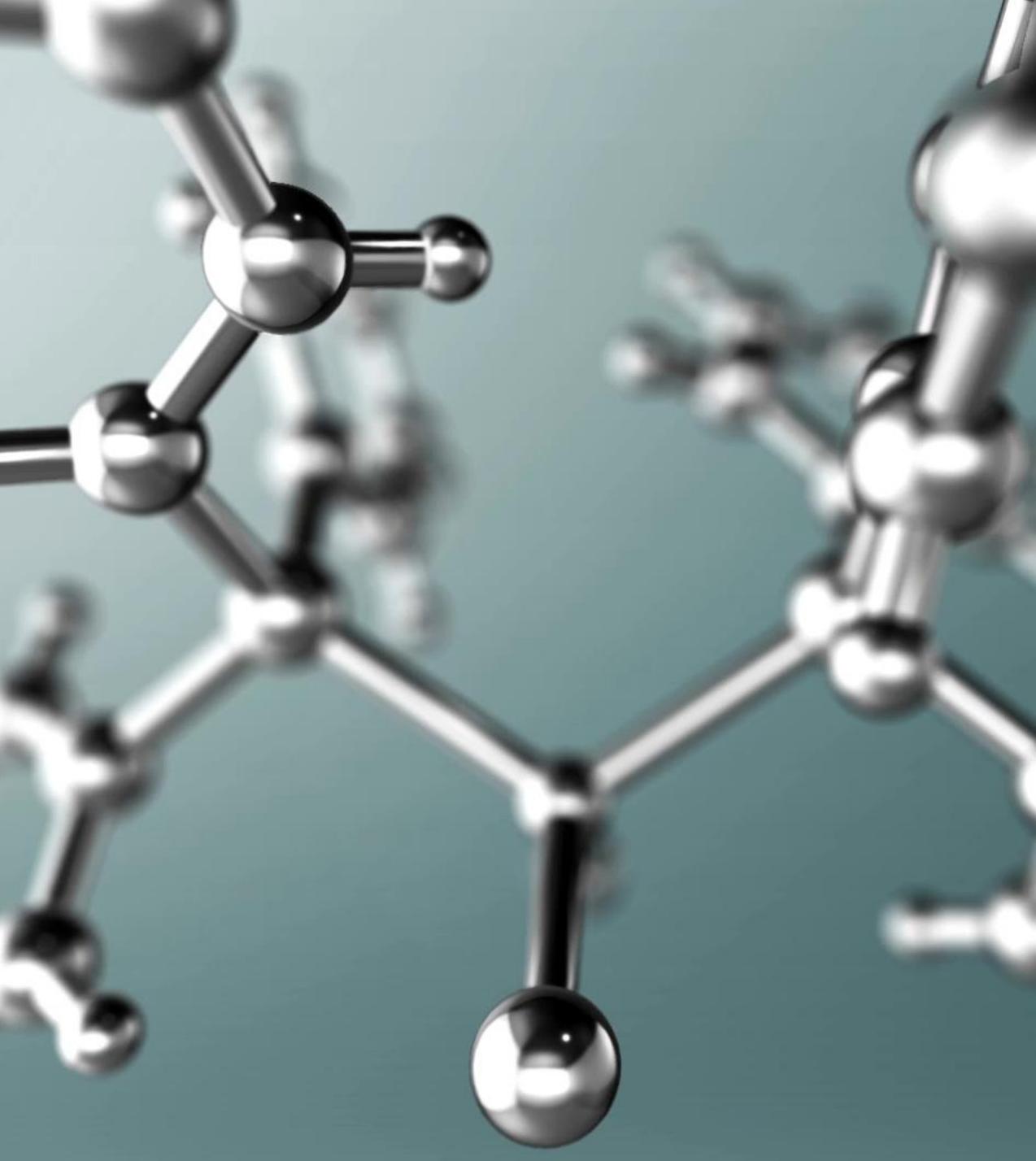
Courses leading to micro-credentials are designed to provide the learner with **specific knowledge, skills and competences** that respond to societal, personal, cultural or labour market needs. Micro-credentials are **owned by the learner**, can be shared and are **portable**. They may be **standalone** or **combined into larger credentials**. They are underpinned by **quality assurance** following agreed standards in the relevant sector or area of activity.

EU Standard elements to describe a micro-credential

- Identification of the **learner**
- **Title** of the micro-credential
- **Country/Region of the issuer**
- **Awarding body**
- Date of issuing
- **Learning outcomes**
- **Notional workload** needed to achieve the learning outcomes (in **ECTS**, wherever possible)
- **Level** (and cycle, if applicable) of the learning experience leading to the micro-credential (EQF, QF-EHEA), if applicable
- **Type of assessment**
- Form of participation in the learning activity
- Type of **quality assurance** used to underpin the micro-credential

Optional Information

- Prerequisites needed to enrol in the learning activity
- Supervision and identity verification during assessment
- Grade achieved
- Integration / stackability options
- Further information



Union principles for design and issuance of micro-credentials

1. Quality
2. Transparency
3. Relevance
4. Valid assessment
5. Learning Pathways
6. Recognition
7. Portable
8. Learner Centred
9. Authentic
10. Information and Guidance

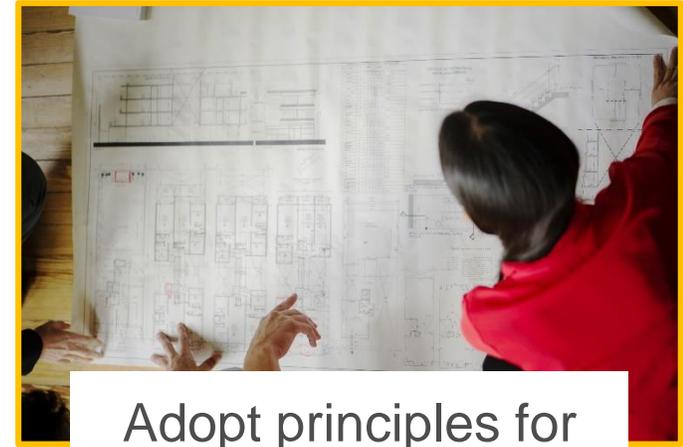
Recommendations to Member States



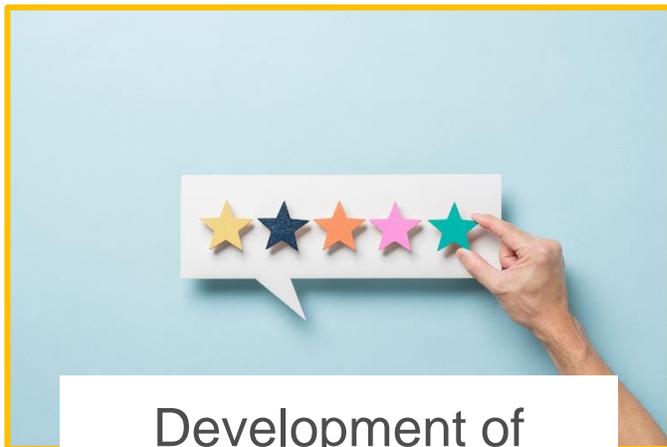
Adopt MCs definition



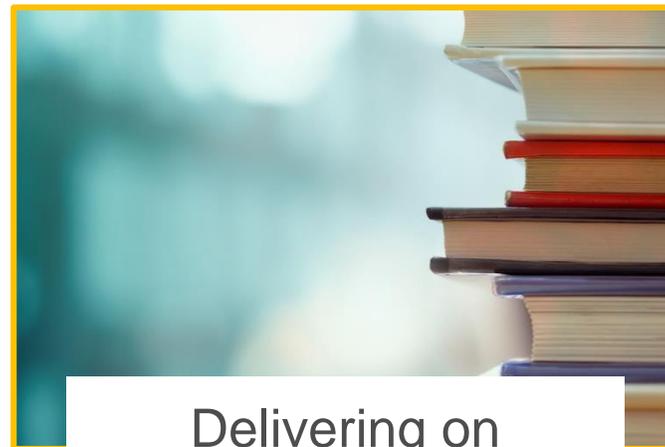
Adopt standard elements



Adopt principles for design and issuance



Development of ecosystem for MCs

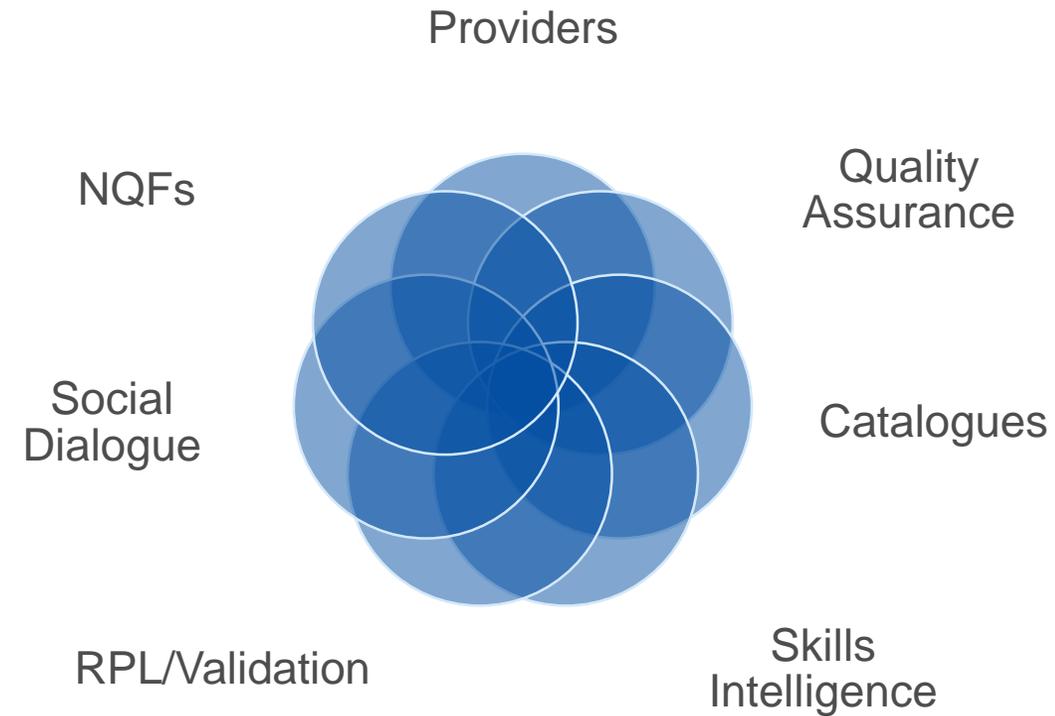


Delivering on potential of MCs



Implementation

Development of ecosystems



Development of ecosystem for MCs Systems

Formal learning

- **Support exploration of MCs by HEIs** (European universities Alliances)
- **Support exploration of MCs by VET Providers** (COVEs)

Non-formal + informal learning

- **Non-formal providers** incl. employers, social partners, civil society organisations, local authorities & private providers
- Promoting the development of MCs designed & approved by employers' and workers' representatives **through social dialogue**
- **Adaptation of validation/RPL processes**

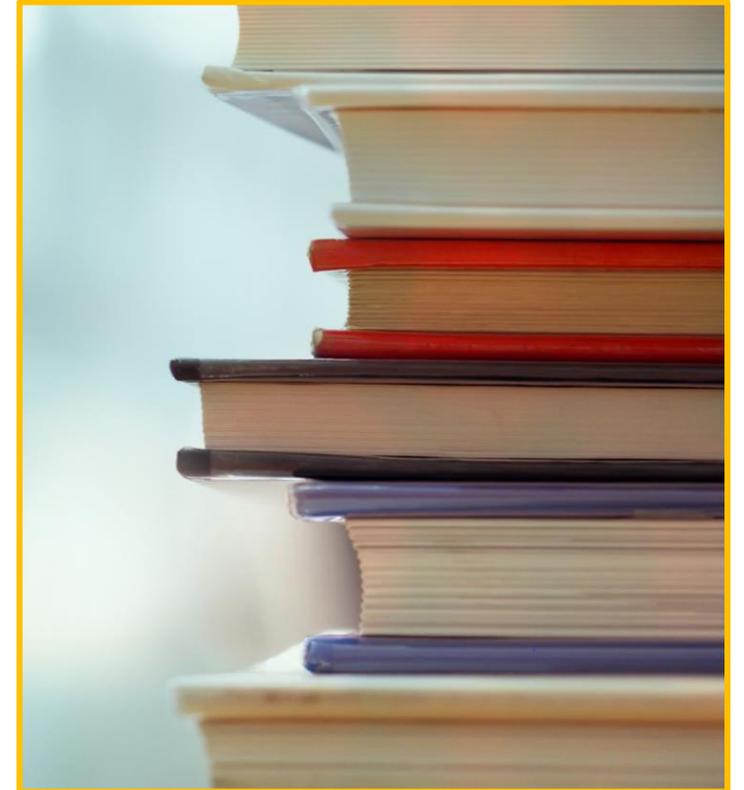
Quality and Transparency

- apply, adapt and develop **quality assurance mechanisms for MCs**
- supporting the use of **'skills-intelligence' systems** to identify needs to develop or update MCs
- ensuring that providers **publish catalogues of MCs**
- **integrate MCs in NQFs**, where relevant.

Education, training and skills policies

Delivering on the potential of micro-credentials

- include MCs in **national catalogues** of education and training courses
- use MCs to **improve access to education and training for all learners**, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups
- use MCs to **support the transition from upper secondary or VET to tertiary education** and the completion of degree programmes
- use MCs to improve basic and advanced **digital skills**
- using MCs to support the development of learning provision in **environmental sustainability**
- promote use of MCs by education and training institutions and other providers to boost the relevance and increase the positive **impact of micro-credentials on the economy of their cities and regions**
- promoting the understanding and use of MCs through **continuing professional development for teachers and trainers as well as academics and researchers**
- promoting use of MCs for the **prompt transfer of the latest research findings into learning opportunities**
- exploring the use of MCs in the European Education Area to **challenge gender and other discriminatory stereotypes** concerning study choices and within educational practices and materials



Active Labour Market Policies

Deliver on the potential of micro-credentials



address **skills mismatches + bottlenecks** in economic sectors and regions

to upskill and reskill workers for **in-demand skills and jobs** (e.g. digital and green)

include MCs in **national registries of training opportunities linked to ILAs**

support **self-employed and non-standard workers**, incl. platform workers

support and motivate **vulnerable groups** to re-enter the labour market

as part of **Youth Guarantee**

as part of the national implementation of **EASE Recommendation**

to meet **regulatory requirements** for jobs/work (e.g. licences, mandatory training and permits)



Member State Implementation

- define measures by **building on relevant national arrangements and financial frameworks** to implement this Recommendation
 - national resource allocations as appropriate
 - links with individual learning accounts
- **make best use of Union funds and instruments**
 - support the necessary reforms, enabling framework, development and use of micro-credentials.

Commission Support

Adapt existing EU tools



Technical implementation through Europass

Support co-operation between Member States and stakeholders



Research and Data Collection

Monitoring and Reporting

Member States should:

- implement the Recommendation as soon as possible
- submit a plan (12 months after adoption) setting out measures to be taken at national level to support the achievement of the objectives of the Recommendation by 2025.

The Commission should:

- assess and evaluate the progress made in implementation via relevant Union monitoring and reporting frameworks
- co-operate and consult with Member States and stakeholders concerned
- report to the Council within 5 years from the date of adoption

Key findings from the survey programme



- **Uncertainty** linked to the **naming** and **function** of microcredentials,
- Emerging mostly in areas such as **ICT, engineering, manufacturing, and construction**, but also in sectors such as hospitality, human health, and social work;
- Clear benefits of microcredentials with regards to the **flexibility** and **responsiveness** to labour market needs;
- There also **needs to be a wider awareness** of microcredentials;
- **Quality assurance** of microcredentials is one of the most important aspects. However, **quality assurance processes differ** and not all MCs are quality assured based on the nationally established quality standards.

Purposes of microcredentials in national qualifications systems



Source: Survey of stakeholders representing national authorities

How do micro-credentials fit in the labour market related education, training and learning?

- Microcredentials refer to **shorter learning activities**.
- Employers are concerned with the speed that the formal qualifications systems can identify skills needs and adapt training offers accordingly. They want a training where:
 - content is developed with **input from the labour market**;
 - content is responsive to the emerging needs in a more **agile** way;
 - is **shorter**, includes **hands-on learning** and is **integrated in workplace**
- The main **providers** of micro-credentials in the **labour market** include large companies, industry associations, start-ups, online learning platforms, non-governmental organisations and international organisations.



Microcredentials in a nutshell

“Microcredentials are evidence of practical, flexible, on-demand, and short learning experiences. This is what makes them so attractive. Common European standards must preserve this attractiveness and not limit it through over - regulation and - formalization. It is thus central to find an appropriate balance between fostering trust and transparency as part of a common approach without compromising the flexibility of microcredentials”

Employers organisations survey, Germany

Thank you



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