



Microcredentials for VET and labour market – The EU perspective

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Microcredentials: Towards flexible learning pathways

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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

Cedefop's
Advisory Group
on the study



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Cedefop has embarked on the global discussion on microcredentials

Defining microcredentials



Main conceptual elements of the study

We adopted a wider **‘dual’ perspective** regarding qualifications

- ‘qualified’ in the sense of having obtained a formal qualification
- ‘qualified’ by virtue of having showed the ability to carry out a job effectively

Traditional vs modern qualifications: microcredentials have a number of overlapping functions with modern ones:

- promote lifelong learning
- enable alternative learning pathways
- are co-defined by stakeholders

The **currency** or **value** of microcredentials in the labour market and for further learning

- as a means of accessing and progressing within employment
- as a gateway to further learning
- in the form of social value.



Where were we standing in 2021?

- **Digital transition – Post-pandemic period**
- **Uncertainty** linked to the **naming** and **function**
- **Diverse** landscape across EU countries - wide range of short learning activities
- Microcredentials' is an **umbrella term**
- **Tight 'Vs' loose** definition: balance between fostering trust and flexibility



Novelty or old wine with new label?

- MCs are a **phenomenon that is growing** - address the limitation of formal QSs to **timely respond to labour market needs**
- MCs do not necessarily present a new form of recognition but a way to **define better** and **standardise** the already existing offers.
- Emerging mostly in areas such as **ICT, engineering, manufacturing, and construction**, but also in sectors such as **hospitality, human health, and social work**

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		
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	YES	YES
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

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

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

Policy discussions at national level

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 - SK

Legislation or draft
regulations
already introduced

EE – IE – LV - ES

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,

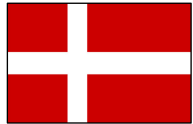
In HR, the term '**micro-qualification**' (*'mikrokvalifikacija'*) was introduced in the 2021 Adult Education Act. Compiled units of learning outcomes (micro-qualifications) lead to short training programmes and/or qualifications at EQF/NQF levels 2-4.

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

Microcredentials and recognition of prior learning

Microcredentials as outcomes of the RPL process

Microcredentials, as a tool of RPL, can be used to

- obtain a partial qualification;
- obtain a full formal qualification (this also relates to accumulation/stackability of MCs);
- gain access to an education programme, including making the transition from VET to higher education;
- gain exemption from part(s) of an education programme and/or shorten its duration;
- gain exemption from part(s) of a professional qualification;



Examples of good practice (consultation groups on microcredentials)

New Zealand: a micro-credential system as part of New Zealand's regulated education and training system.

Sweden: increased stakeholder involvement

Catalunya: pilot programme accrediting micro-credentials

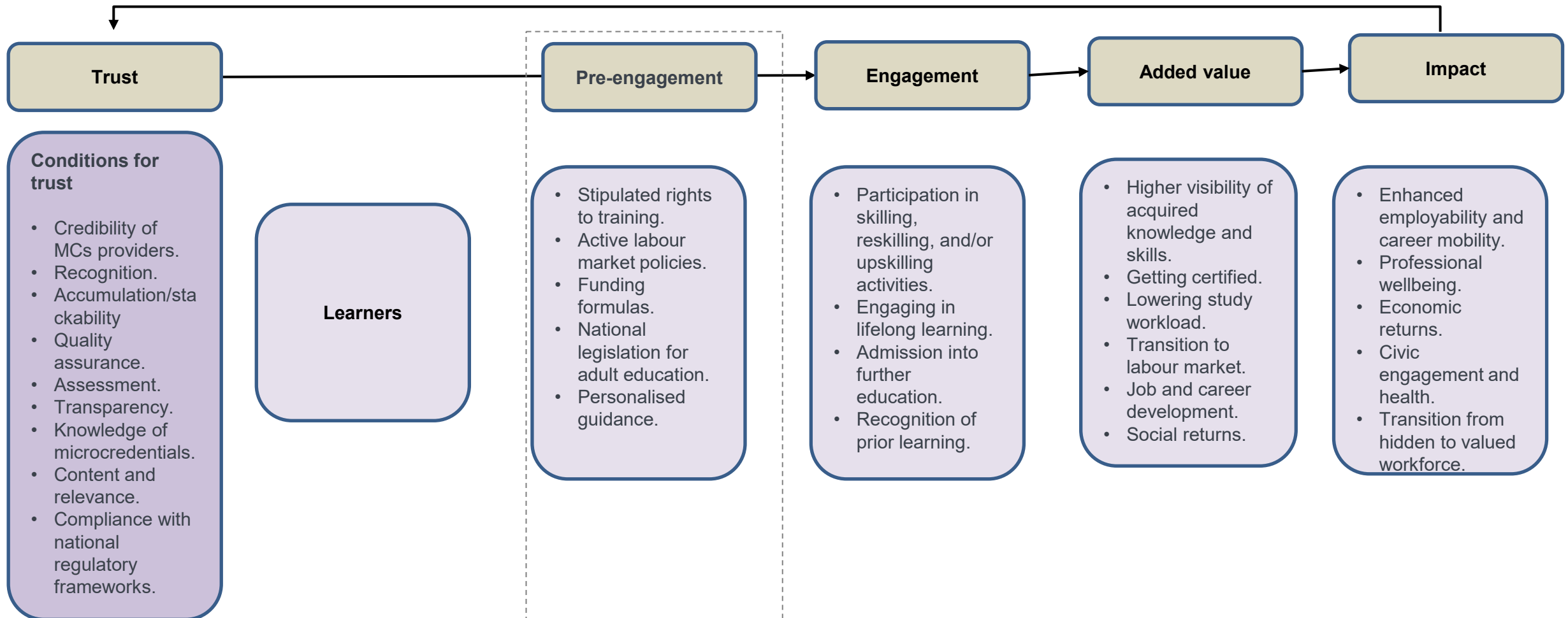
Finland: closer cooperation between academia and the labour market – i.e. the hygiene passport

Slovakia: legislative conditions for the introduction of micro-certificates in practice

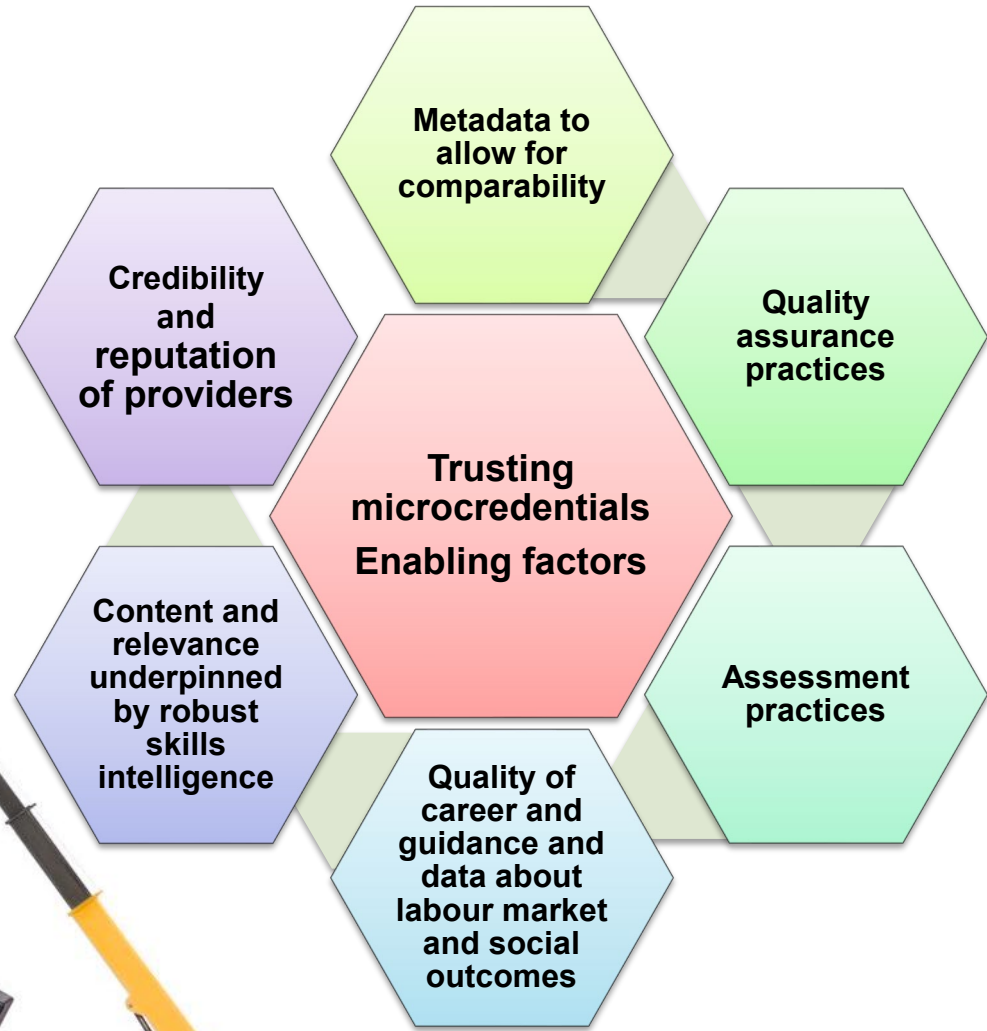
Barriers to a wider uptake of microcredentials

- Lack of **adequate and transparent QA standards**
- **Uncertainties** about nature of microcredentials
- The way **learning outcomes are assessed and documented**
- Lack of **formal recognition** by national authorities
- **Incompatibility** of some microcredentials with NQ systems
- **Limited opportunities** for the accumulation and **combination** of microcredentials

A complex MC landscape: establishing trust - generating added value



Conditions for building trust



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Source: Cedefop, (2023, forthcoming)

Vision for the future

Different scenarios: from a European MCs registry and opening up of NQFs to more incremental approaches based on metadata and easing comparability.

- ❖ Need to focus on **LM sectors**
- ❖ Need to zoom in on the **profile** and **content** of MCs
- ❖ Establish **standards** and **accreditation** processes
- ❖ Enable **Recognition – transferability** of MCs
- ❖ MCs for **social inclusion?**

Microcredentials (MCs) for VET & labour market learning are promising, but getting things right is a balancing act

STRENGTHS

- Labour market responsiveness
- Up/reskilling & lifelong learning
- Skills validation potential
- Providers/employers cooperation
- Broadening access to learning
- Flexible learning pathways

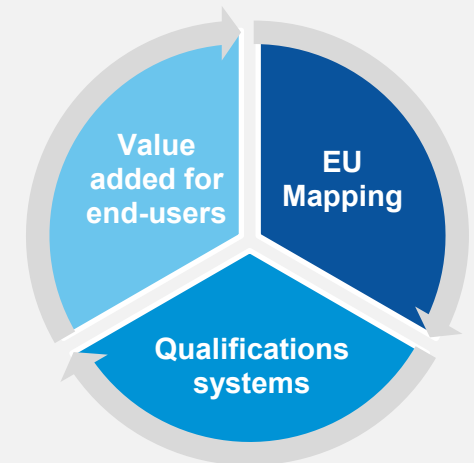
WEAKNESSES

- Uncertainty about benefits
- Proliferation of unregulated MCs
- Confusion among users
- Quality assurance transparency
- Recognition challenges
- Reaching disadvantaged learners

PURPOSES OF MCs IN NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS SYSTEMS



Source: Survey of stakeholders representing national authorities.



More information on [Cedefop webportal](#)



Thank you

For further information:

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Project page

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

Podcast

www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/podcasts/episode-6-microcredentials-are-they-here-stay

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