Microcredentials for VET and labour market learning

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14 June 2023, El futuro de la certificación
The role of micro certs and what is happening in UE
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 Microcredentials
Which are the distinguishing features of micro-credentials?

• MCs an **umbrella term** – uncertainty linked to the naming and function
• MCs most often indicate the **title, the date of issue, the identity of the holder, the provider and achieved LOs.**
• More **diverse** learners than full qualifications, e.g. employees, new hires, individual learners, customers of a company
• Non-formal MCs address the **limitation** of formal QSs to timely respond to labour market needs
Microcredentials and evolving qualifications systems
MCs and qualification systems-frameworks

- MCs do not necessarily present a new form of recognition but a way to define better and standardise the already existing offers.

- Incorporation of MCs into national qualification systems varies substantially between European countries.

- Two main developments paving the way for the inclusion of MCs in NQFs are:
  - modularisation of qualifications
  - opening up of NQFs to qualifications awarded outside formal education and training.

- Microcredentials can be outcomes and tools of an RPL process.

- Lack of adequate quality assurance practices comes as one of the main hindering factors to the utilisation of microcredentials in RPL.
Microcredentials discussion at national policy level

Policy discussions at an initial stage


Advanced policy discussions

NL – PL - SK

Legislation or draft regulations already introduced

EE – IE – LV - ES

Indicative examples of countries
Modularisation 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. 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.

In ES, the new system of formal vocational training spans from micro-training to degrees and specialisation courses, based on learning progression. Micro-training modules are partial and cumulative, and lead to a partial accreditation of competence.

Linking modularisation to microcredentials
Opening up qualifications frameworks to microcredentials

- **CZ**: The NSK functions as a framework for qualifications obtained outside formal education and training, responding directly to the needs of the labour market. **Vocational qualifications** could be considered a type of MCs, as they fit the European Commission’s definition of MCs.

- **MT**: Some **MQF awards** could be considered as a type of MCs. One of the aims of the 2023 update of the referencing report, is to adequately deal with MCs in order to be well integrated and regulated in the education system.

- **NL**: The Dutch Government sees classification of MCs into the NQF and their referencing to the EQF as crucial for **transparency**.

- **PL**: Some **market qualifications** are considered as microcredentials; increasing number is included in the integrated qualifications system (IQS);

- **SI**: **Supplementary qualifications** are comparable to microcredentials
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 (e.g., as in CY, DE, IE, NL and ES);
- obtain a full formal qualification (this also relates to accumulation/stackability of MCs) (e.g., as in EE, IE, LUX and NO);
- gain access to an education programme, including making the transition from VET to higher education (e.g., as in IE);
- gain exemption from part(s) of an education programme and/or shorten its duration (e.g., as in Belgium-FL, DK and ES);
- gain exemption from part(s) of a professional qualification (e.g. as in BE-FL and FR);
## Main characteristics of microcredentials in the manufacturing and retail sectors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Title of microcredential</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Workload</th>
<th>Link to ECTS or ECVET specified</th>
<th>Mode of delivery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>Safety procedures in medical processes</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>12 modules, 17 days</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>In person/online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>Quality management system and welding coordination</td>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>22.5 hours, 3 days</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>In person/online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>International Welding Engineer (IWE)</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>448 hours</td>
<td>ECVET</td>
<td>In person/online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>International Welding Practitioner (IWP)</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>168 hours</td>
<td>ECVET</td>
<td>In person/online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>Manufacturing Qualification in Additive Manufacturing</td>
<td>Germany, France, Italy, Spain, UK, Portugal and Turkey.</td>
<td>60-70 hours</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>Online/blended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>Manufacturing VET Award in Process Manufacturing</td>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>125 hours</td>
<td>ECVET</td>
<td>In person/online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>Manufacturing 3D printer operator for industrial applications</td>
<td>Czechia</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>In person/online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>Manufacturing International Welding Practitioner (IWP)</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>168 hours</td>
<td>ECVET</td>
<td>In person/online</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

23 out of the 39 mapped microcredentials explicitly describe their learning outcomes. The remaining either do not mention their LOs or present them in the form of content description.

- **Highly targeted/specialised types of training** that are designed around specific occupational/professional profiles.
- **Focus on new and emerging topics and technologies**.
- **Mode of delivery differs**; it can be in-person training, online or blended.
Emerging questions!

- Can certificates awarded following solely the completion of a performance-based assessment be considered microcredentials?
- Should microcredentials be regulated, standardised, or formalised to mimic the nature of existing sectoral and professional skills certificates?
- Is there a need to ‘re-brand’ a well-functioning procedure that leads to a certificate that is well-accepted by the labour market?
Industry or professional certifications

- **Finland**: the hygiene passport, a microcredential already in use in the country's education system, is designed to promote food safety by mandating food industry workers to prove their knowledge of basic hygiene.

- **French digital service provider Groupe Orange**, offers online courses on themes related to social responsibility and technology, such as support for a sustainable economy, digital equality, artificial intelligence and cybersecurity.

- **The German social start-up Kiron Open Higher Education** provides online courses for refugees worldwide using MOOCs; aim to bring them to a point where they can enter the labour market, a university or the VET system.

- **In Latvia**, supply of short-term training courses initiated by companies (for example: MAXIMA training centre, IKI Academy).

- **Vendor certifications**, some of which have set industry-specific competence standards, for example in ICT, are being integrated into vocational and university qualifications.

Added value of microcredentials for end users
Would you consider or have you already made use of microcredentials for training purposes?

- **I HAVE MADE USE OF MICROCREDENTIALS**: 13%
- **I AM CONSIDERING MAKING USE OF MICROCREDENTIALS IN THE NEAR FUTURE**: 20%
- **I DO NOT CONSIDER USING MICROCREDENTIALS FOR TRAINING PURPOSES**: 29%
- **I AM CURRENTLY TRYING TO FIND OUT HOW MICROCREDENTIALS COULD BE OF VALUE TO ME**: 38%

*Source: Survey of stakeholders representing employees, students and adult learners and individuals who are currently unemployed (N=1180).*
A complex MC landscape: establishing trust - generating added value
Microcredentials and **added value** for end users

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learners and employees</th>
<th>Employers</th>
<th>VET providers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gainful employment.</td>
<td>Provide access to education and training that meets the changing and emerging needs of companies.</td>
<td>Incentivise VET institutions to take a proactive role as talent brokers and skills advocates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage further education and qualification completion.</td>
<td>Address talent shortages and skills gaps.</td>
<td>Encourage VET providers to consider the needs of employers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raise the income and opportunities of employees.</td>
<td>Provide access to cheaper and faster upskilling and reskilling of the workforce.</td>
<td>Help make skills more visible to students and employers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve employability and employment prospects.</td>
<td>Improve employee retention through improved job and career pathways in the company.</td>
<td>Involvement in local, regional and sectoral skills ecosystems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide flexible learning modules for lifelong learning.</td>
<td>Train employees with specialised in-depth knowledge to successfully adapt to changing technological and business needs.</td>
<td>Reach underprivileged people, those who could not be reached with traditional programmes (e.g., homeless, refugees).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Cedefop (2023, forthcoming)
Ways to support engagement with microcredentials

- User-centred Career guidance and counselling
- Funding continuing training
- Systemic and organisational support measures
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.

Both from a **user** and a **system** perspective each of these scenarios has advantages but also challenges given the diversity of provision.
Microcredentials: A labour market megatrend

22 and 23 June 2023
Virtual event

#microcredentials
Thank you

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