A European Approach to Micro-credentials

BUILD UP SKILLS EUROPEAN EXCHANGE

30 NOVEMBER 2021
Proposal for Council Recommendation on Micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability

- EU Definition of Micro-credentials
- Standard Elements
- Principles for Design and Issuance of Micro-credentials
- Recommendations to Member States
- Recommendations to Commission
Objectives

• Supporting Individuals
• Preparing Providers of MCs
• Supporting inclusion and social fairness
Evidence gathering and analysis
April – July 2021

Open Public Consultation
- >500 replies
- >90 position papers

Empirical evidence:
- NESET, OECD,
- Cedefop,
- Erasmus+ projects

- Wide consultation with education, training, lifelong learning, labour market stakeholders

- Questions on key building blocks:
  - A common definition
  - Critical information elements to describe micro-credentials
  - Quality assurance
  - Alignment to National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs)
  - Learning outcomes and notional workload
  - Recognition: for further studies and/or employment purposes
  - Portability: issuing, storage and sharing of micro-credentials
Outcomes of consultation

• Interest and use of micro-credentials expected to grow
• Broad welcome for the EU action
• Clear potential in MCs but fundamental questions (e.g. on definition and purpose) must be clarified
• Importance of ensuring the flexibility of micro-credentials
• Different expectations from stakeholder groups, e.g. university perspective v employer perspectives
The Learner Voice

Motivation
- Personal Situation
- Costs
- Support from employer

Barriers to Learning
- Lack of time
- Lack of support from employers
- Uncertainty about recognition of MC by employers

- Those most effectively engaging in micro-credentialing already have degrees and jobs
- Those without the knowledge or cultural capital to navigate the market are likely to invest in training that is not actually valued by employers
- Digital learning tends to favour individuals who possess complex multi-literacy skills and have experience of self-regulated learning.
- Some industry-led micro-credentialing initiatives have been successful at attracting non-traditional learners (e.g. Google IT Support Professional Certificate).
Most important aspects of high-quality micro-credentials (n=508)

- **Acceptance by employers**: 81% very important, 17% rather important,
  1% rather not important.
- **Quality assurance based on transparent quality standards**: 75% very important,
  21% rather important, 4% rather not important.
- **Recognition by education and training organisations**: 74% very important,
  21% rather important, 5% rather not important.
- **Recognition by national authorities**: 72% very important, 20% rather important,
  8% rather not important.
- **Content linked to labour market needs**: 58% very important, 27% rather important,
  15% rather not important.
- **Content originates from reputable education and training providers**: 56% very important,
  29% rather important, 15% rather not important.
- **Offer skills and competences of direct use**: 54% very important, 35% rather important,
  11% rather not important.
- **Can be obtained through a validation of current skills**: 51% very important,
  37% rather important, 12% rather not important.
- **Offer skills and competences for my further learning**: 50% very important, 41% rather important,
  9% rather not important.
- **Inexpensive**: 49% very important, 40% rather important, 11% rather not important.
- **Building blocks towards partial or full qualifications**: 49% very important,
  37% rather important, 14% rather not important.
- **Availability in a widely spoken language**: 47% very important, 41% rather important,
  12% rather not important.
- **Availability on online learning platforms**: 42% very important, 42% rather important,
  6% rather not important.
- **Content endorsed by employers and business**: 42% very important, 36% rather important,
  2% rather not important.
- **Availability in native language**: 31% very important, 35% rather important, 34% rather not important.
- **Facilitate cross-border mobility**: 26% very important, 43% rather important, 31% rather not important.

**Most important aspects of micro-credentials**
EU-level actions and measures which facilitate the take-up of micro-credentials (n=508)

- Very important
- Rather important
- Rather not important
- Not important
- I do not know/do not wish to answer

- Ensure recognition of MCs
- Develop clear definition
- EU standard for certificate contents
- Set Europe-wide quality standards
- Ensure transferability of MCs in education and training
- Ensure portability of MCs
- Support the combination of MCs into larger credentials
- Regularly update regulatory frameworks
- Encourage the integration of MCs in national guidance services
- Support closer cooperation between actors
- Provide digital tools
- Encourage national lists of trusted providers
- Include information on workload

Feedback on EU action
Open questions

- Differentiation between MCs and qualifications (esp. re: stackability)
- Approach to QA
- Links with labour market
- Role in inclusion
- Platforms/providers/courses
- Awareness and understanding
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