



Microcredentials for VET and labour market learning

Anastasia Pouliou

Expert in qualifications and credentials – Future of VET

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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



Where were we standing in 2021?

- **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
- Digital transition – Post-pandemic period



Novelty or old wine with new label?

- MCs are a **phenomenon that is growing**
- 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	Highly targeted/specialised types of training that are designed around specific occupational/professional	
Manufacturing	Safety procedures in medical processes	France	12 modules 17 days	NO	In person	Focus on new and emerging topics and technologies	
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	Mode of delivery differs; it can be in-person training, online or blended.	
Manufacturing	International Welding Practitioner (IWP)	International (41 countries)	156 hours	ECVET	In person/blended	YES	YES
Manufacturing		Germany, France, Italy, Spain, UK, Portugal and Turkey.	60-70 hours	NO	Online/blended	Microcredentials often describe learning outcomes. The remaining either do not mention their LOs or present them in the form of content description	
		Austria	1 month (fulltime)	NO	In person		
Manufacturing		Malta	125 hours	ECVET	In person	YES	YES
Industrial		Czechia	NS	NO	In person	NO	NS

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,

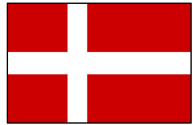
In HR, the term '**micro-qualification**' ('*mikrokvifikacija*') was introduced in the 2021 Adult Education Act. Compiled units of learning outcomes (micro-qualifications) lead to short training programmes and/or qualifications at EQF/NQF levels 2-4.

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.

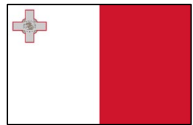
Opening up qualifications frameworks to microcredentials



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

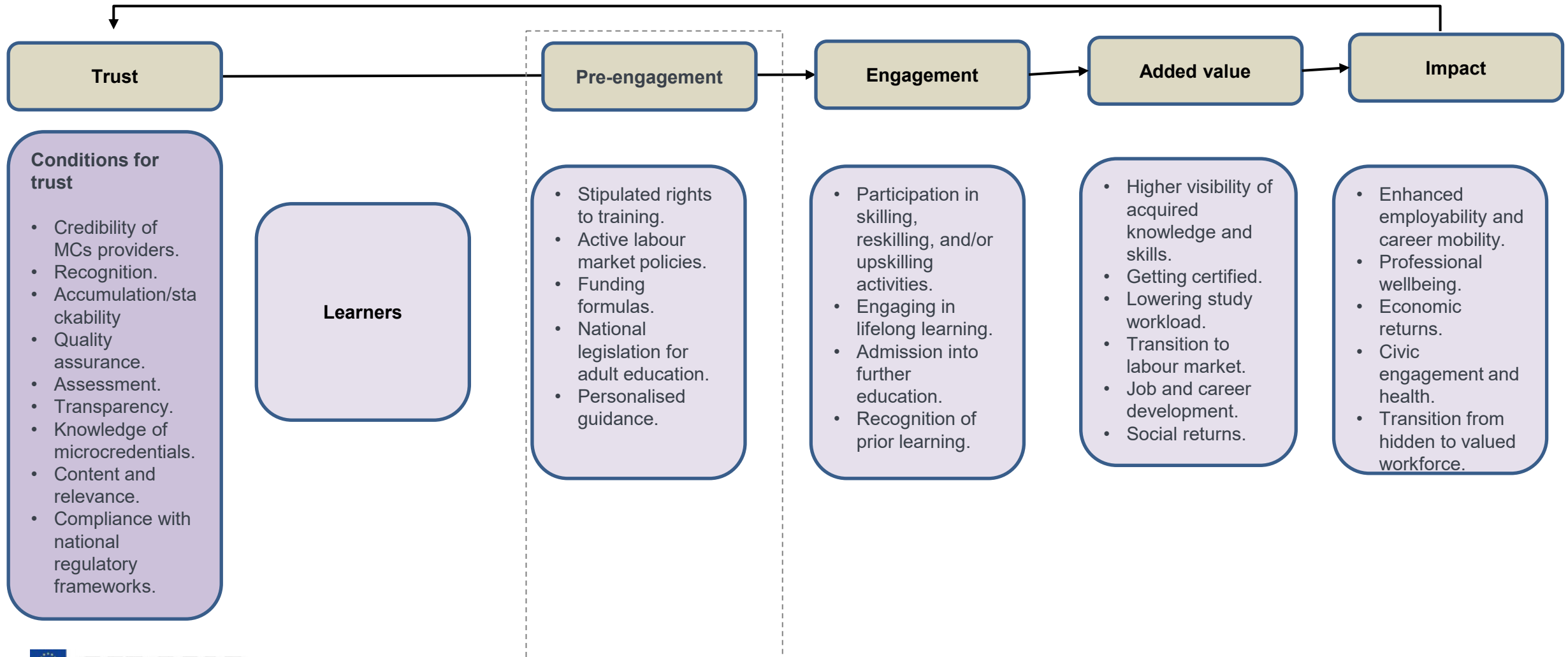
Finland: closer cooperation between academia and the labour market – i.e. the hygiene passport

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

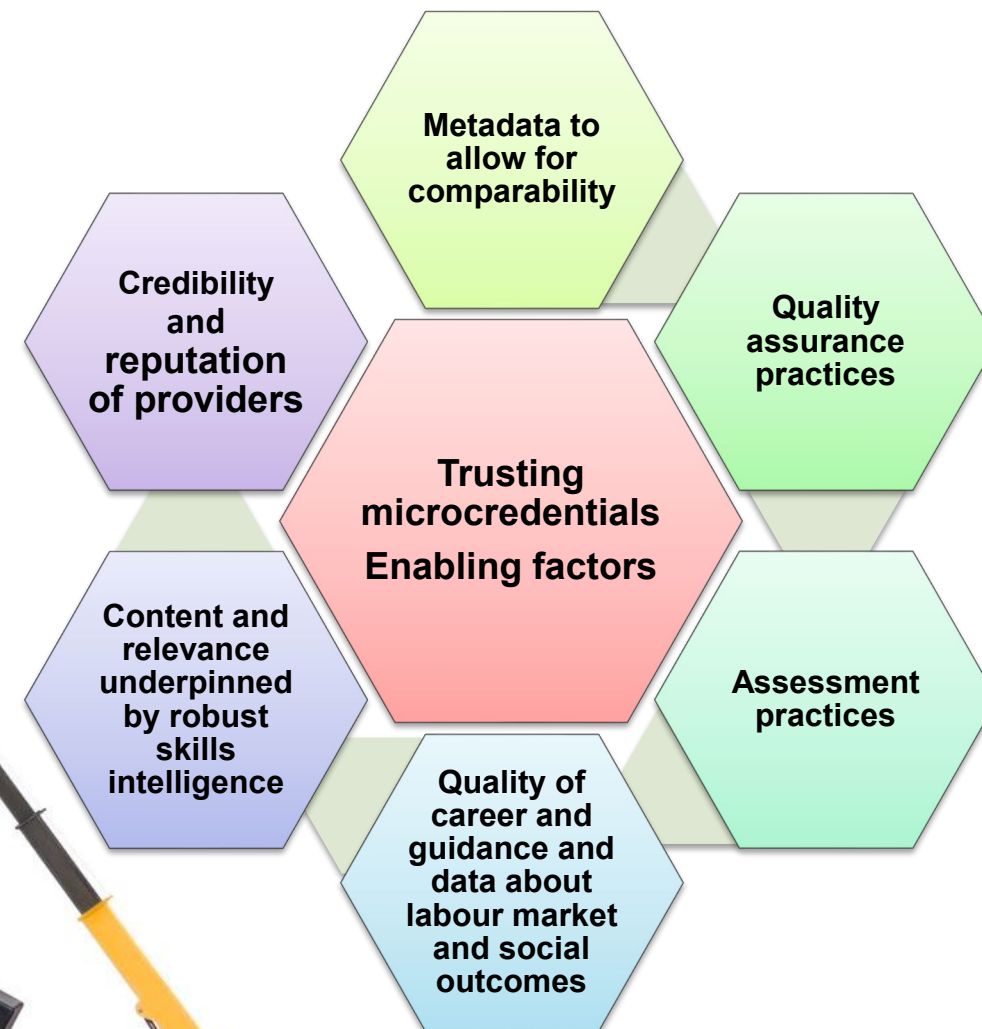
Barriers to a wider uptake of microcredentials

- 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

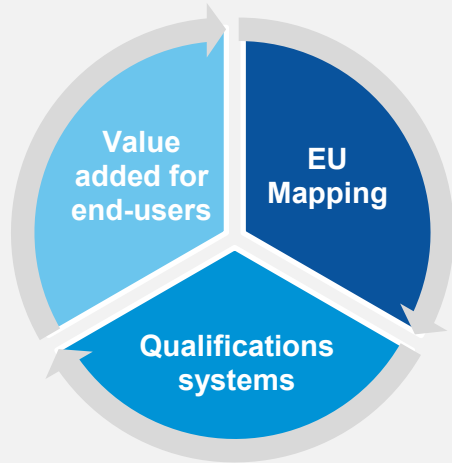
WEAKNESSES

- 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:

anastasia.pouliou@cedefop.europa.eu

Iraklis.PLIAKIS@cedefop.europa.eu

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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