

A European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability



A European Approach to Micro-Credentials



An initiative of
European Commissioners
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European Skills
Agenda

European
Education Area


Digital Education
Action Plan

Why a European approach to micro-credentials?

- **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




at least
60%
of all adults should
be participating in
training every year by
2030

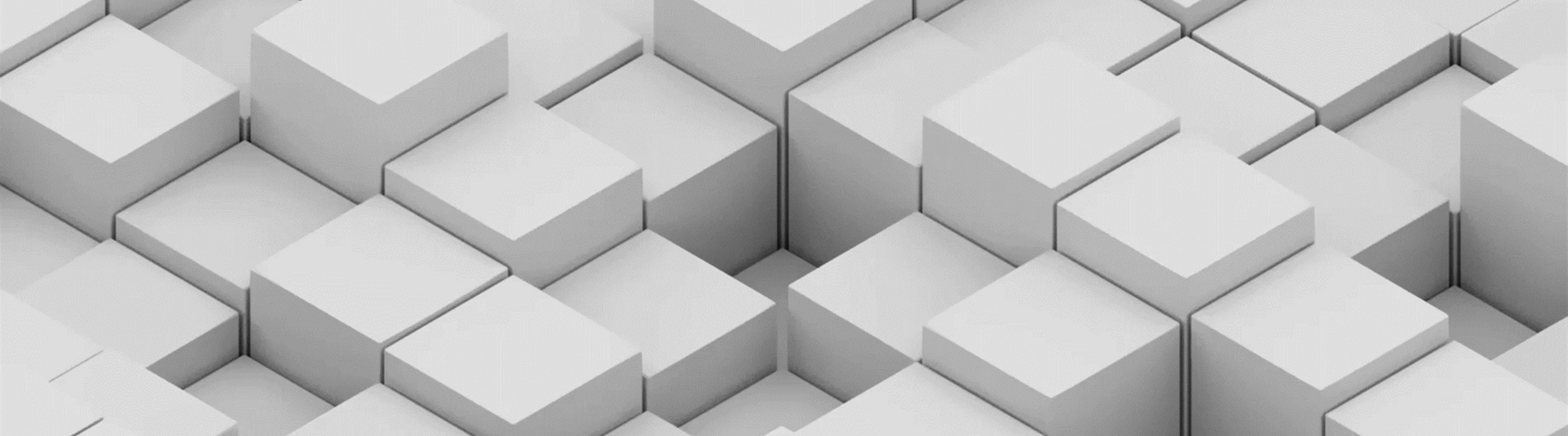

at least
78%
of the population aged 20
to 64 should be in
employment by 2030

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 and just transitions to the green and digital economy and to be better equipped to deal with current and future challenges
- **Support the preparedness of providers** of micro-credentials to enhance the quality, 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 can be used to complement & enhance education, training, lifelong learning and employability ecosystems
- Micro-credentials are not to replace or disrupt existing systems or qualifications, but to complement and enhance them
- The proposal establishes a common European approach to the ongoing and emerging provision of micro-credentials
- The proposals sets out a definition and guidance for the design, issuance and description of micro-credentials to facilitate their quality, transparency and uptake



The proposal establishes ‘building blocks’ to develop an EU approach to micro-credentials:

- A common **definition** of micro-credentials
- Union **standard elements** to describe a micro-credential
- Union **principles for design and issuance** of micro-credentials



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 criteria.

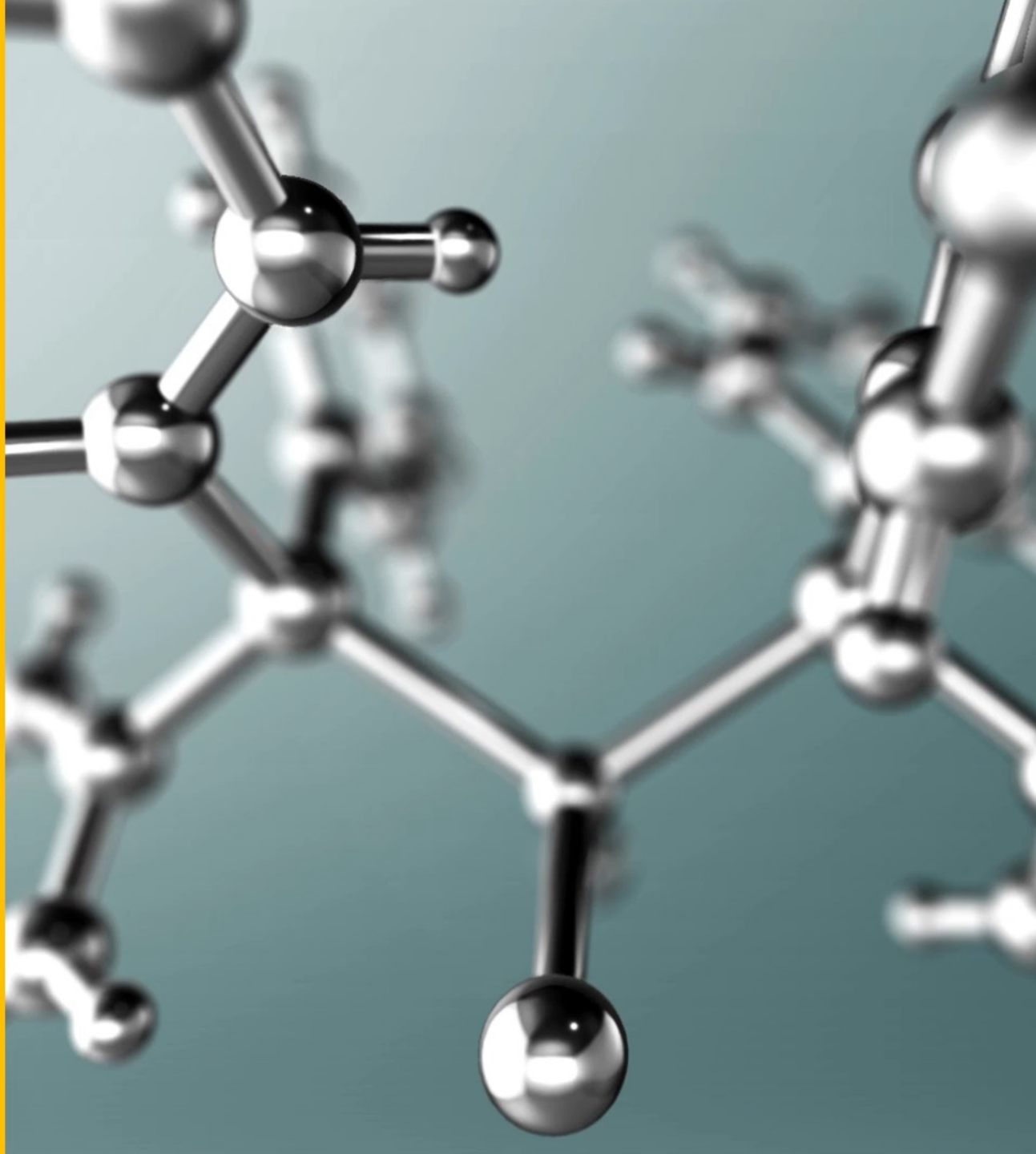
Learning experiences leading to micro-credentials are designed to provide the learner with **specific knowledge, skills and competences** that respond to societal, personal, cultural or labour market needs. Micro-credentials are **owned by the learner**, can be shared and are **portable**. They may be **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(ies)/Region(s) of the issuer**
- **Awarding body(ies)**
- 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

1. Quality

- Micro-credentials are subject to internal and external quality assurance by the system producing them
- External quality assurance is based primarily on the assessment of providers (rather than individual courses) and the effectiveness of their internal quality assurance procedures.
- Internal QA: overall quality of the micro-credential itself: the quality of the course, learners' feedback, peers feedback
- Standards: ESG, Annex IV EQF, EQAVET, registries, labels, etc.

Transparency

2. Transparency

- Micro-credentials are measurable, comparable and understandable with clear information on learning outcomes, workload, content, level, and the learning offer, as relevant
- ECTS where relevant, National Qualification framework/systems, information on the offer of MCs.



3. Relevance

- Micro-credentials should be designed as distinct, targeted learning achievements and learning opportunities leading to them are updated as necessary, to meet identified learning needs.
- Collaboration between education and training organisations, employers, social partners, other providers and users of micro-credentials is encouraged to increase the relevance of the micro-credentials for the labour market.

4. Valid assessment

Micro-credential learning outcomes are assessed against transparent standards.



5. Learning Pathways

- Micro-credentials are designed to support flexible learning pathways, including the possibility to ‘stack’, validate and recognize microcredentials from across different systems.
- Micro-credentials are designed to be modular so that other micro-credentials may be added to create larger credentials. Decisions lie with the receiving organisation and should support the goals and needs of the learner.
- Validation of non-formal and informal learning: obtaining micro-credentials is possible on the basis of assessment of learning outcomes resulting from non-formal and informal learning.

A stylized illustration on the left side of the slide. It features a dark blue graduation cap with a yellow tassel hanging from the left. Below the cap is a white diploma with two red vertical stripes and a red ribbon tied around it. The background is a solid teal color.

6. Recognition

- Recognition has a clear signalling value of learning outcomes for smaller modules of learning and paves the way for a wider offer of such learning experiences in a comparable way across the EU.
- Micro-credentials are recognised for academic or employment purposes based on standard recognition procedures used in recognising foreign qualifications and learning periods abroad, when dealing with micro-credentials issued by formal education providers.



7. Portability

- Micro-credentials **are owned by the learner** and may be stored and shared easily, including through **secure digital wallets** (e.g Europass) based on open standards and data models.



8. Learner Centred

- Micro-credentials are designed to **meet the needs of the target group of learners**. Learners are involved in the internal and external quality assurance processes and **their feedback is taken into account** as part of the continuous improvement of the micro-credential.



9. Authentic

- Micro-credentials contain **sufficient information to check** the identity of the learner, the issuer, the date and location of issuance of the micro-credential.

10. Information and Guidance

- Information and advice on micro-credentials are **incorporated in lifelong learning guidance services** and should reach the broadest possible learner groups, in an inclusive way, supporting education, training and career choices.



Recommendations to Member States



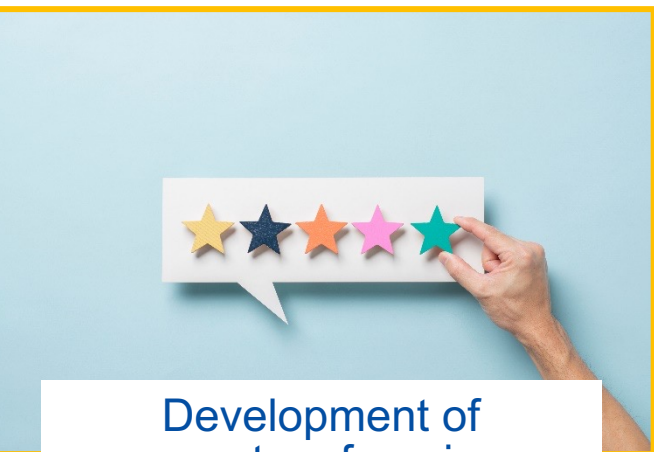
Adopt the definition



Adopt standard elements



Adopt principles for design and issuance



Development of ecosystem for micro-credentials



Delivering on potential of micro-credentials



Implementation

Quality and Transparency

Development of ecosystem for micro-credentials

- apply, adapt and develop **quality assurance mechanisms** for micro-credentials issued by different types of providers
- supporting the use of **‘skills-intelligence’ systems** to analyses of labour market needs and demographic changes so they can identify any needs to develop or update micro-credentials

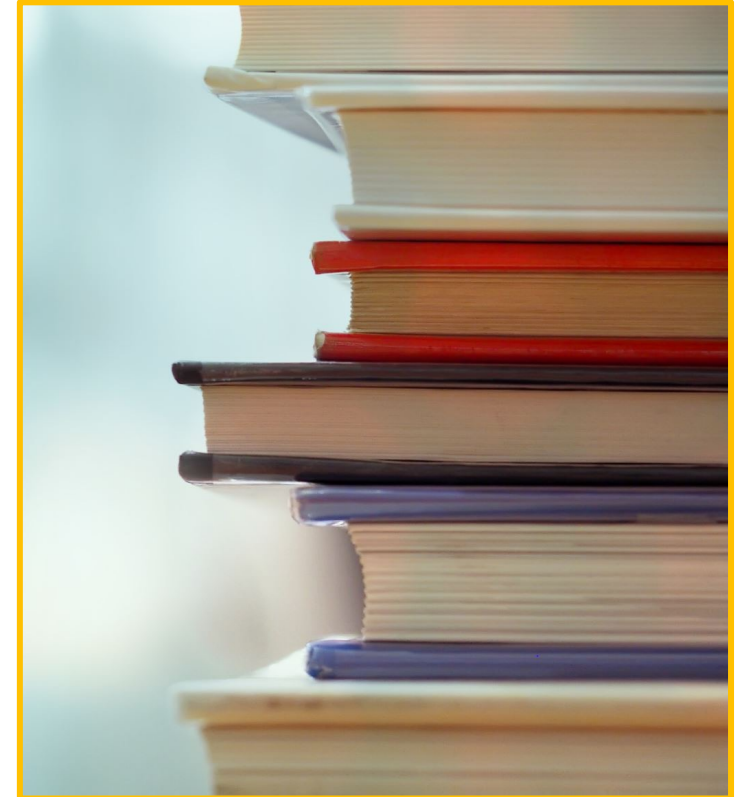


- Encouraging providers to **publish catalogues of MCs** they offer, including, where relevant, their policy on the recognition of micro-credentials issued by other providers;
- **integrate micro-credentials in national qualifications frameworks and systems**, where relevant.

Education, training and skills policies

Delivering on the potential of micro-credentials

- Encourage inclusion of 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



Commission Support

Develop and adapt
existing EU tools



Support co-
operation between
Member States and
stakeholders



Technical
implementation
through Europass



Research and Data
Collection

Thank you

