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# Microcredentials: A Labour Market megatrend reshaping skills and work

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# A Global Vision for Lifelong Learning and Workforce Adaptation

- ❖ Traditional degrees - **no longer sufficient** to reflect the breadth and pace of evolving workforce needs
- ❖ Microcredentials: a **transformative** solution
- ❖ Shift in how learning is **recognized, delivered, and applied** in real-world contexts.

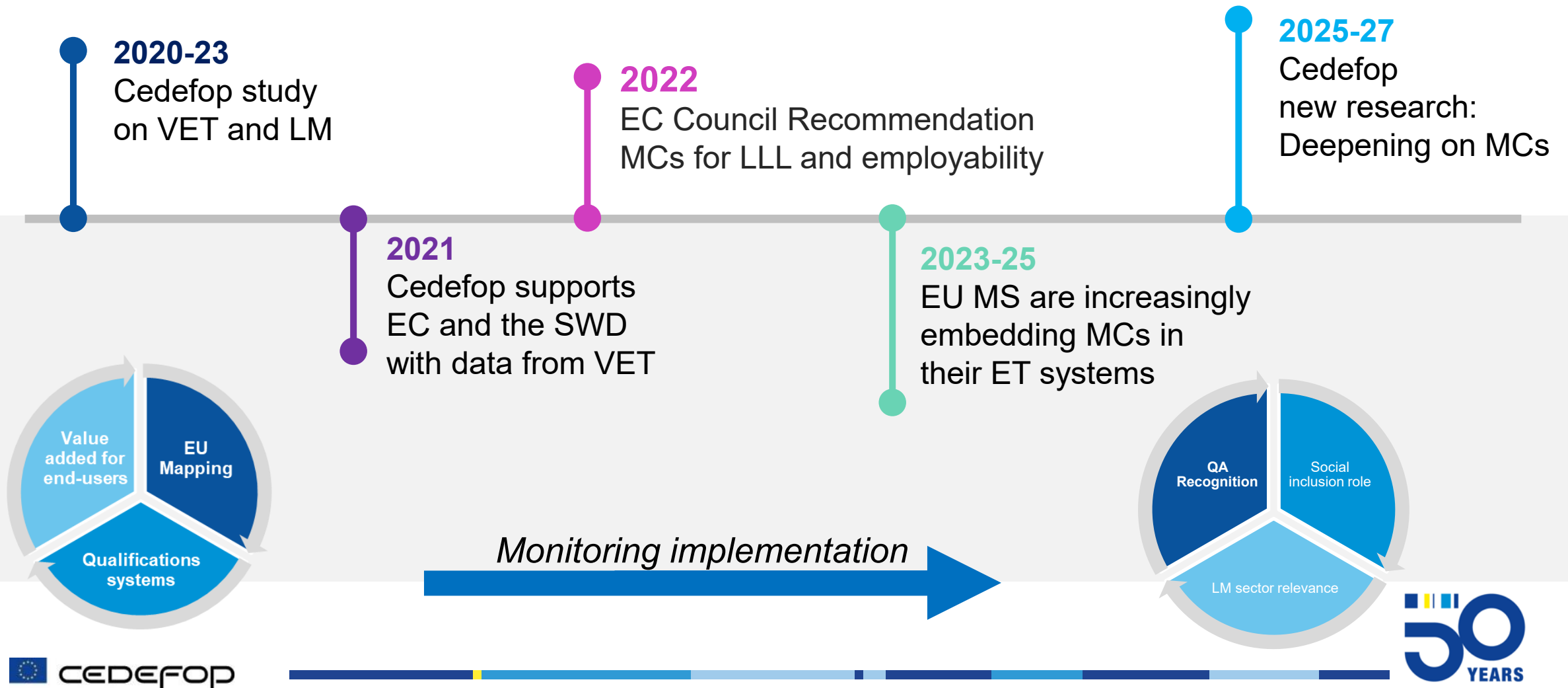




MCs provide learners with stackable, skill-specific achievements that are often co-designed with industry and aligned to current and future skills needs



# Are microcredentials becoming a big deal?



# Four scenarios for microcredentials

Scenario 1: Supply-driven microcredentials (as part of formal education) for further learning

Scenario 2: Supply-driven microcredentials for LM entry and job setting (professional credentials)

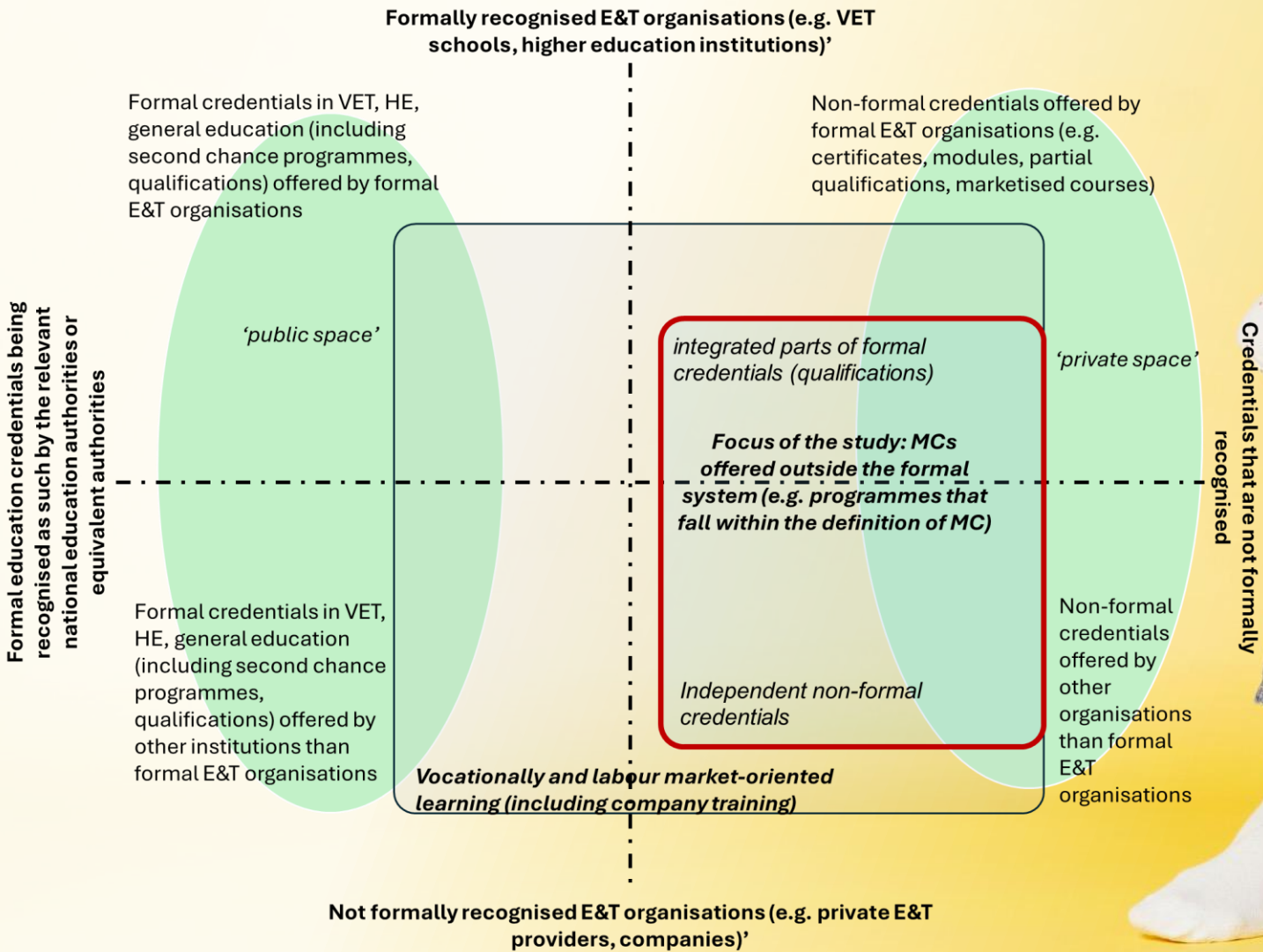
Scenario 3: Demand-driven microcredentials (examples of enterprises/sectors)

Scenario 4: Microcredentials for vulnerable groups /groups at risk (upskilling/reskilling)

Source: [Pouliou, A. \(2024\)](#)



# What is the position of MCs (in focus) in the wider landscape of non-formal ET?



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# Exploring the diversity of MCs outside the formal ET system

**RQ1. Which are the main features (content and profile) of microcredentials in European labour market related education, training and learning?**

**RQ2. Which is/are the main function(s) of microcredentials (currently being used by a vast array of providers and institutions) and what can be done to fulfil it?**

- ☐ Focus on the **recognition and validation** of non-formal and informal learning
- ☐ exploration of developing **automatic recognition** of MCs



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# MCs doorways **for recognition** in 2 ways

- ❑ **for education and training purposes:**

*the formal acknowledgement of micro-credentials by a competent recognition entity for providing an applicant with the right to apply for admission to an education or training programme, to transfer credit within it, or to exempt part or all of it.*

- ❑ **for employment purposes:**

*the acknowledgement of microcredentials by an employer for providing an applicant with the possibility of employment or job progression.*





# RQ1. What are the operational characteristics of MCs (in focus)?

## 1. Credential Identification and Issuance:

- Title of the microcredential.
- Issuing body (type of provider)
- Country/region of the issuer.
- Issuance of a digital credential (creation of a digital portfolio)

## 2. Learning Outcomes and qualifications level:

- Defined learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, autonomy, and responsibility).
- Level of the qualification (e.g. level in national system/framework, equivalent NQF/EQF level (NB: indicate whether the MC formally has this NQF/EQF level, or whether the MC could informally be positioned at a certain NQF/EQF level)).
- Relationship to occupational fields, labour market sector, or tasks.

## 3. Workload and Credits:

- Notional workload required to achieve learning outcomes (e.g., ECTS, hours of learning).

## 4. Assessment and Certification:

- Type of assessment used (e.g., written, practice-oriented, mixed).
- Basis for awarding the credential (e.g., participation in programme, validation of prior learning, assessment only).
- Use of external assessment

## 5. Pedagogical and Delivery Features:

- Delivery format (e.g., online, face-to-face, blended).
- Learning site (e.g., workplace, classroom, dual learning environments).
- Role of the teacher (e.g., facilitator, lecturer).
- Control over learning (e.g., self-directed or teacher-centred).

## 6. Access:

- Entry requirements for the credential.

## 7. Use of the MC in formal education and outside

- Accumulation or stackability of MCs (possibility of combining MCs towards a qualification)
- Potential for automatic recognition across borders or institutions (NB: ability to integrate the MC (acquired elsewhere) in a formal VET/HE qualification).

## 8. Stakeholder Relevance:

- Engagement with industry or employers in designing the credential.
- Relevance of the credential to labour market needs.
- Transparency and clarity for learners, employers, and education providers.

## RQ2. What are the function(s) and purpose(s) of MCs outside formal E&T?

- **Labour Market Advancement**

Investigate how MCs certify specific skill sets, their transparency to employers, and their utility in recruitment, particularly in fast-evolving industries.

- **Facilitating Further Learning:**

Analyse how MCs enable upskilling and reskilling, contributing to LL and access to further (formal/non-formal) education pathways

- **Social Inclusion and Mobility:**

Assess the role of microcredentials in recognising skills, promoting equity, and providing opportunities for individuals from diverse backgrounds to gain formal recognition.



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# The role of Quality Assurance

**RQ3.** Which are the elements to consider a microcredential as '**quality assured**'?

- ☐ Which are the **quality assurance mechanisms** used to ensure the quality of microcredentials issued by different types of providers?
- ☐ Is quality assurance for microcredentials informed by relevant **regional and international standards and guidelines**? And if yes, which ones?
- ☐ What is the **role of labour market stakeholders** in designing, developing and implementing microcredentials and the quality assurance process?



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# RQ3. What are the QA procedures underpinning MCs?

## ❖ **Key features of underpinning QA systems**

- ❖ Type of quality assurance mechanism (certification, quality awards, inspection, self-assessment)
- ❖ Responsible body for QA (government agency, department, ngo, other)
- ❖ Scope of assessment (organisation level, or programme level)
- ❖ Costs (what costs are involved)

## ❖ **Assessment process**

- ❖ Quality-assessed training elements (External quality certificate, leadership and management, ongoing monitoring, organisational structure, public information, quality management system, regulatory compliance, staff recruitment and training, training design and delivery)
- ❖ Assessment tools and methods (Analysis of performance indicators, expert reviews, interviews, self-assessment questionnaires, site visits, surveys)

## ❖ **Assessment outcomes**

- ❖ Grading system (fail/pass, or multi-category grading systems)
- ❖ Validity period of the outcome (in years)
- ❖ Benefits to providers (Display of quality label, eligibility for public funding, licence to operate, listing in a registry of providers, award)

## ❖ **Additional features:**

- ❖ QA informed by relevant regional and international standards and guidelines
- ❖ Regulations related to ensuring the involvement of labour market stakeholders in:
  - ❖ Designing, developing and implementing microcredentials;
  - ❖ The QA process (and the role these stakeholders have).



# Potential of MCs to support the twin transition

**1.** Microcredentials serve **multiple purposes**, ranging from offering an entryway into the labour market to providing highly valued professional top-up solutions in advanced IT-intensive manufacturing.

**2.** They help shape **industrial ecosystems** (e.g. innovation clusters), they are geared to local needs and offered via global platforms.

**3.** Some provide a **quick** and **targeted** response to specific skill gaps while others are **embedded in comprehensive skills strategies**.





# Reasons for selecting the manufacturing sector

- ❖ **A broad economic sector** – one of the largest and most dominant sectors in the EU, which employ a large portion of the EU working population .
- ❖ It possesses **different development trajectories** and **skills systems**.
- ❖ Historically the sector aims at **different demographics** for its workforce.
- ❖ Manufacturing has VET systems with **different starting points and trends** between countries.
- ❖ The manufacturing and service industries demand **continuous learning**, given that products and working conditions **are subject to rapid change**



# Information collected (via a template) in selected examples in manufacturing

*(a) a title; (b) a provider or awarding body;  
(c) learning outcomes (LOs); (d) duration  
and pace; (e) notional workload or credits;  
(f) type of assessment; (g) option to  
accumulate and combine; (h) link to  
European qualifications framework (EQF)  
and national qualifications frameworks  
(NQF); (i) link to occupational standards; (j)  
mode of delivery; (k) format of certification;  
(l) prerequisites needed to start a learning  
activity; (m) target group; (n) country or  
region where available; (o) purpose; (p)  
costs and funding options; (q) additional  
information where and if relevant*



### **Current research:**

- **Construction sector (green focus)**
- **Cultural and creative industries (CCI)**



# MCs are promising but getting things right is a balancing act



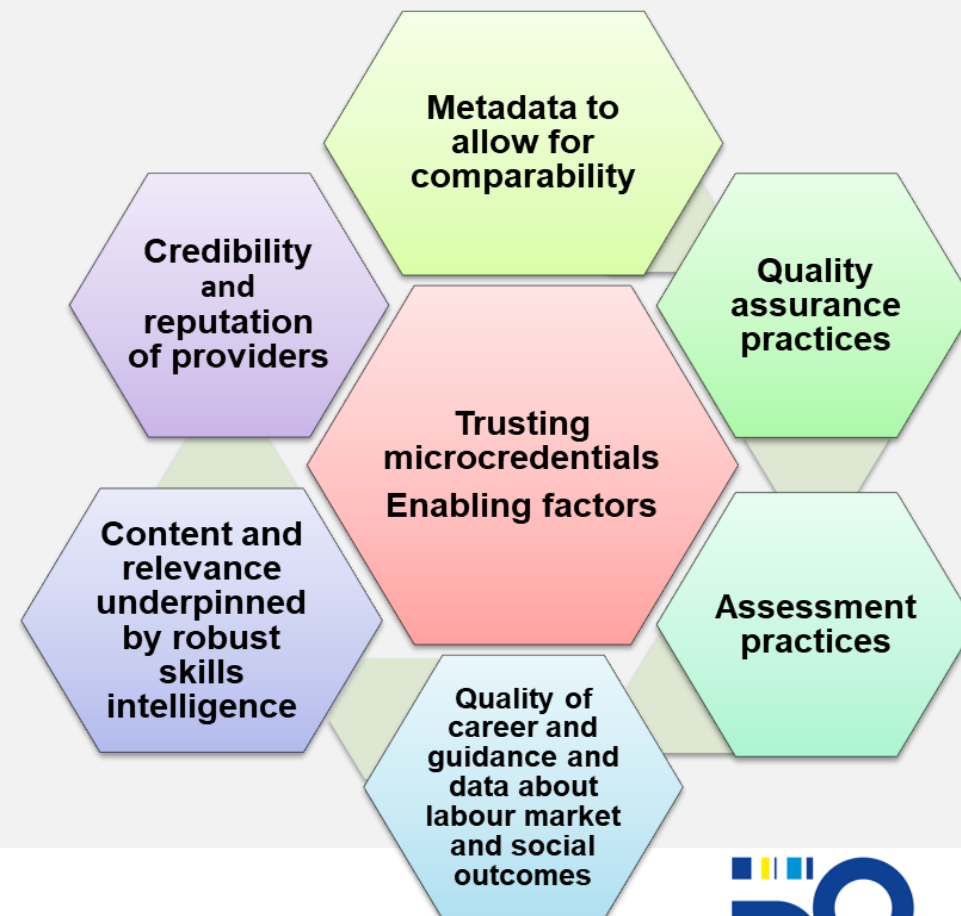
## STRENGTHS

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

## BUILDING TRUST IN MCS



More information on [Cedefop webportal](https://cedefop.europa.eu/)



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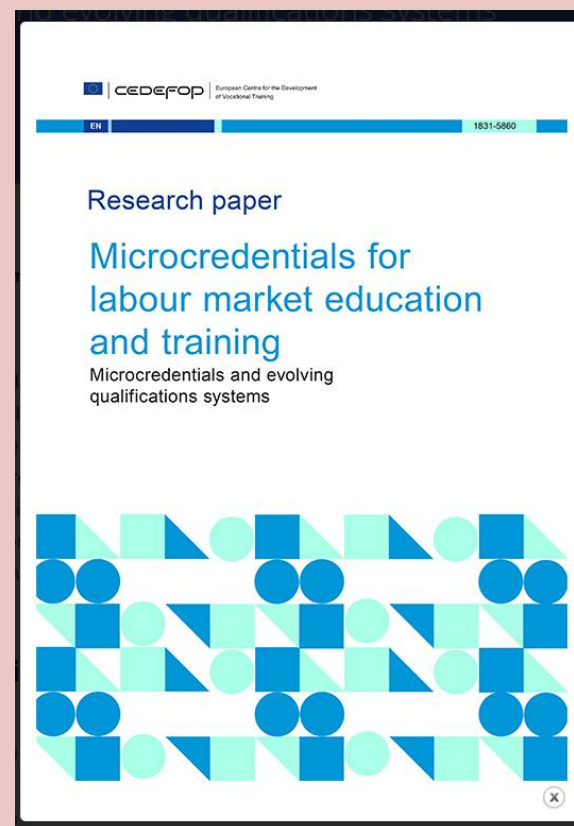
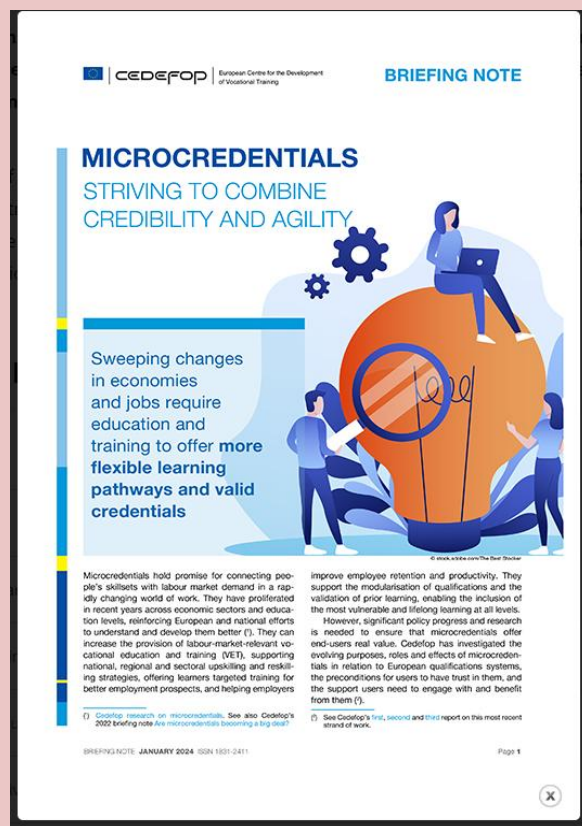
# The **future** of Microcredentials

- ❖ Microcredentials as a learning revolution
- ❖ Empowering learners, workers & employers
- ❖ Essential for future-ready skills



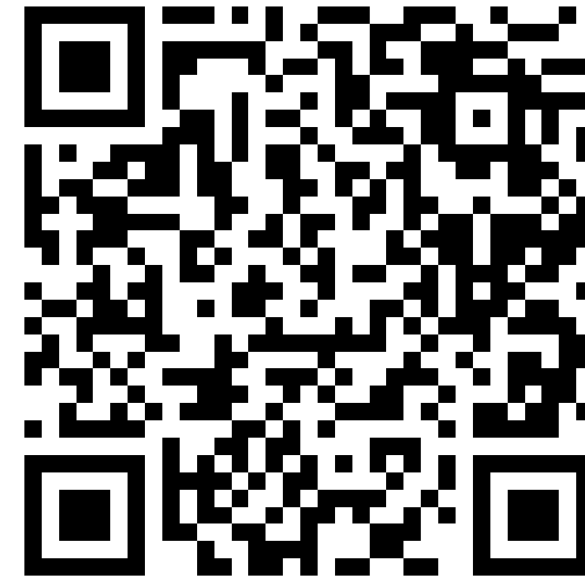


# Microcredentials in Europe Publications



Shape the future of  
microcredentials emerging  
outside formal education and  
training **systems!**

Take the [survey](#) (deadline **18/7**)

The background of the left slide features a collage of hand-drawn sketches including a laptop with a signal wave, a paper airplane, a search bar, speech bubbles, a lightbulb with gears, a smartphone, a magnifying glass, a computer monitor, a bar chart, and a stack of money. A brown tag with the text 'TRAINING COURSES' is tied with a string to a large key.

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**Headline**

Shape the future of  
microcredentials in  
Europe: **take the  
survey**

Learn more [cedefop.europa.eu](https://cedefop.europa.eu)





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# Microcredentials and the future of learning

23 October 2025

10.00 - 13.00 (CET)

Virtual event

[cedefop.europa.eu](https://cedefop.europa.eu)



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Project page

[www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/projects/microcredentials-labour-market-education-and-training](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/projects/microcredentials-labour-market-education-and-training)

Publications

[www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications/6221](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications/6221)

[www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/projects/microcredentials-labour-market-education-and-training/publications](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/projects/microcredentials-labour-market-education-and-training/publications)

Podcasts

Cedefop/ILO podcast on [Microcredentials: powerful new learning tool or just “pouring old wine into new bottles”?](#)

Credentials unscripted podcast for the US context.

Available in [Spotify](#) and [Apple Podcasts](#)



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