

Validation of non-formal learning: The use of Microcredentials

Workshop 5



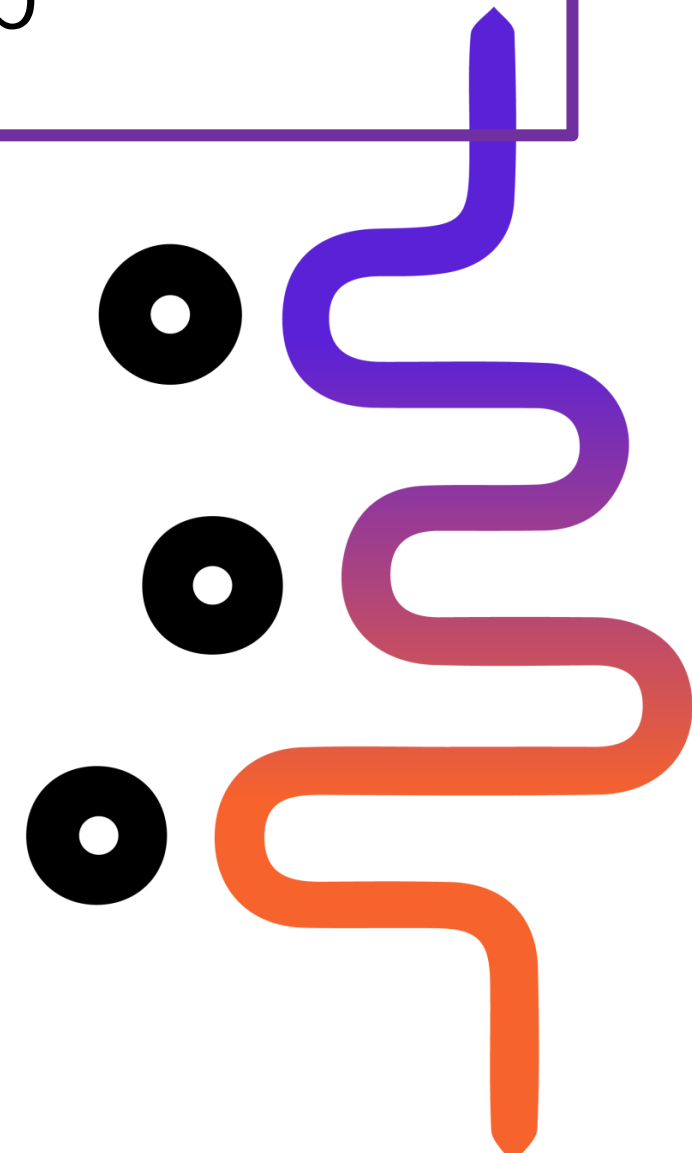
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MMC Mediterranean
Management Centre

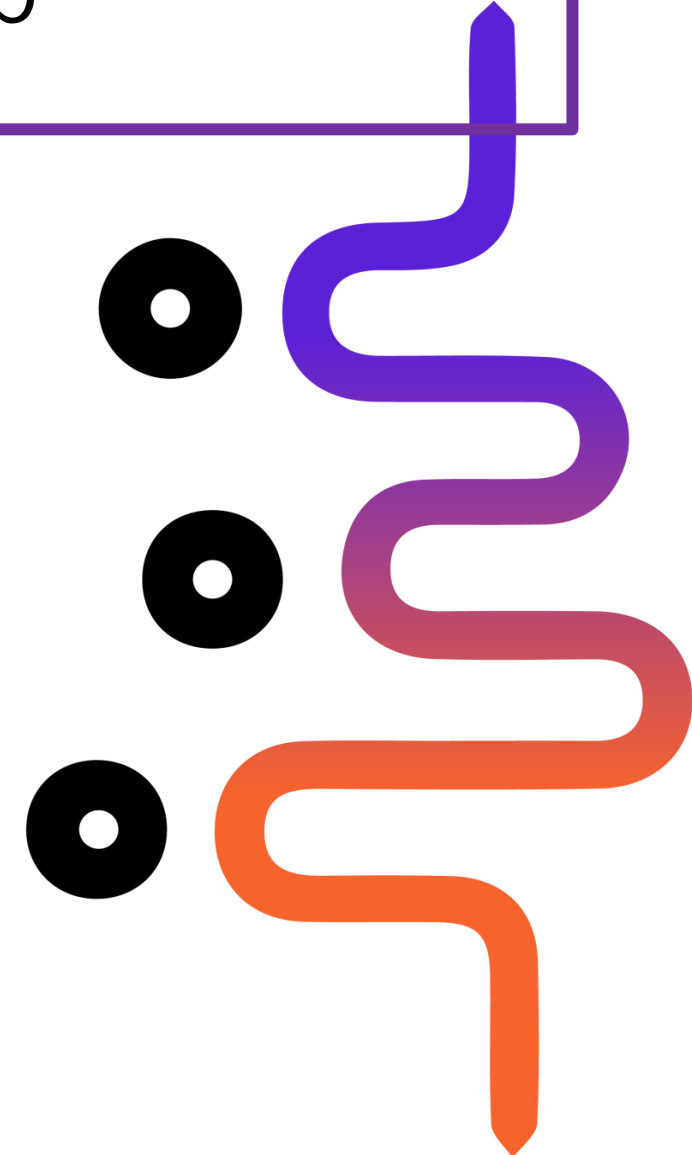
Objectives of the workshop

- In terms of knowledge
 - To explain microcredentials
 - To present applications of microcredentials
 - To list mandatory and optional elements of microcredentials
 - To define learning outcomes
 - To list the applications of learning outcomes
 - To identify the steps leading to the design of a microcredentials programme
 - To define portability and stackability of microcredentials
 - To name different approaches to assessment
 - To present pathways to integration on the system level and provider level

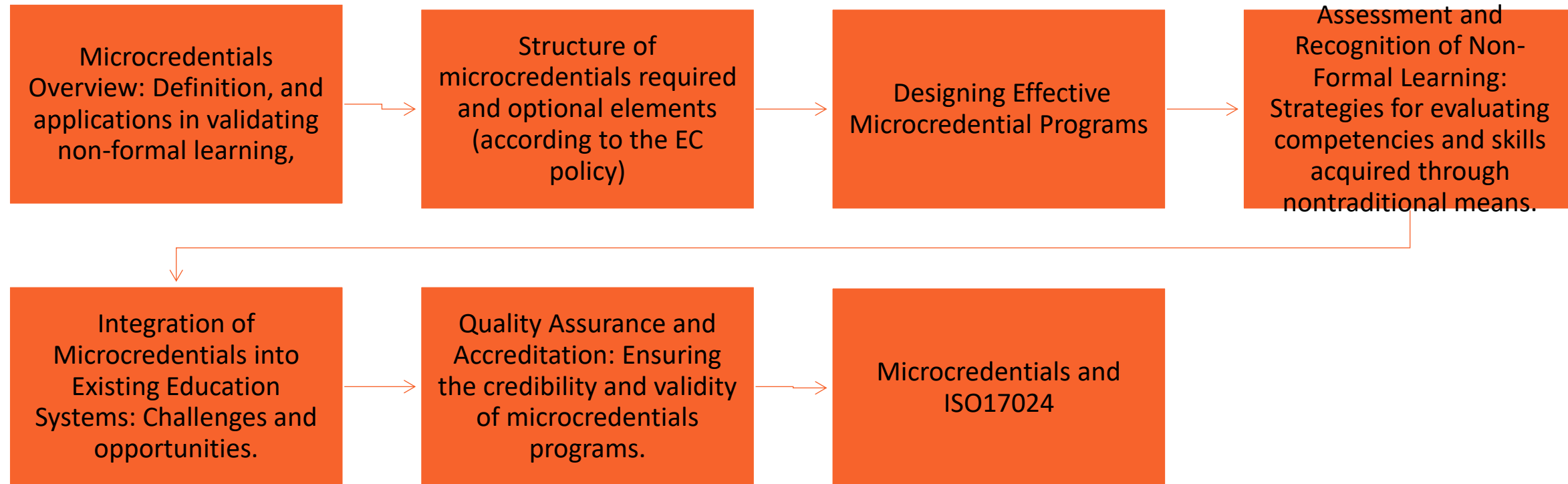


Objectives of the workshop

- In terms of Skills
 - To develop microcredentials
 - To list mandatory and optional elements of microcredentials
 - To compose effective learning outcomes
 - To develop microcredentials
- In terms of knowledge
 - To value microcredentials



Workshop routemap



Microcredentials Overview

Unit 1

Official definition of microcredentials

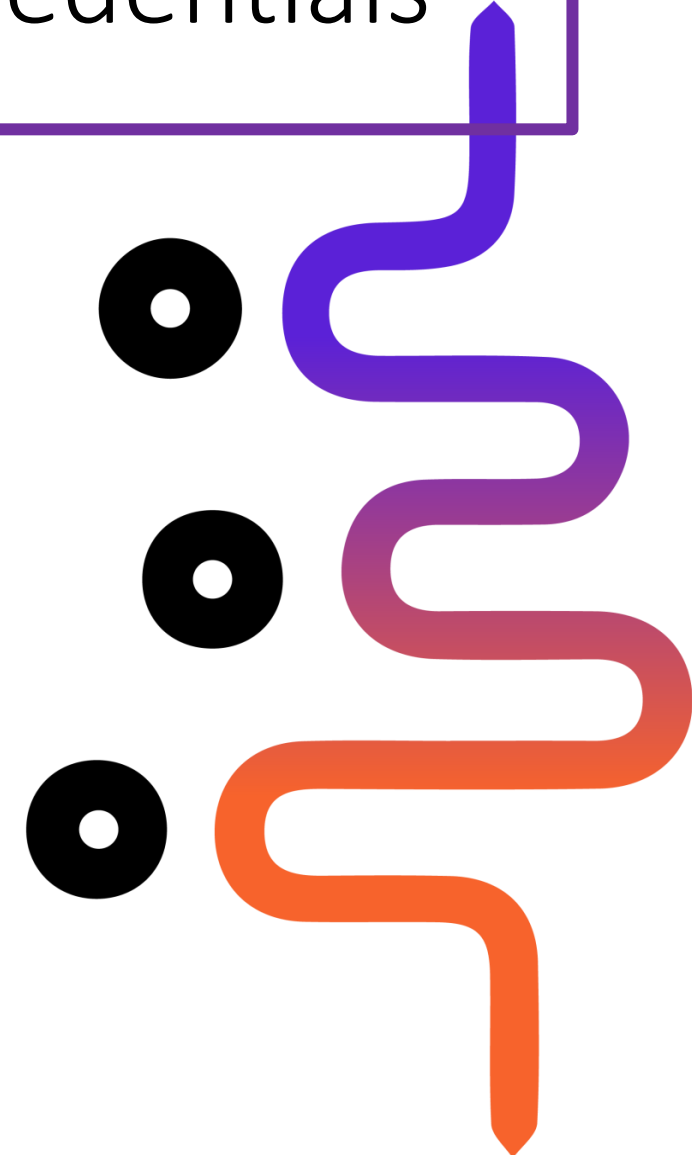
- ‘Micro-credential’ means the record of the learning outcomes that a learner has acquired following a small volume of learning. These learning outcomes have been assessed against transparent and clearly defined standards.

Microcredentials

- They make possible the **targeted, flexible** acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences to meet **new and emerging needs in society and the labour market**, while not replacing traditional qualifications.
- Micro-credentials can help **certify the outcomes of small tailored learning experiences**.
- Micro-credentials can be designed and delivered by a **variety of providers** in different learning settings (whether these settings be formal, non-formal or informal).

Courses leading to microcredentials

- designed to provide the learner with specific knowledge, skills and competences
- that respond to societal, personal, cultural or labour market needs.

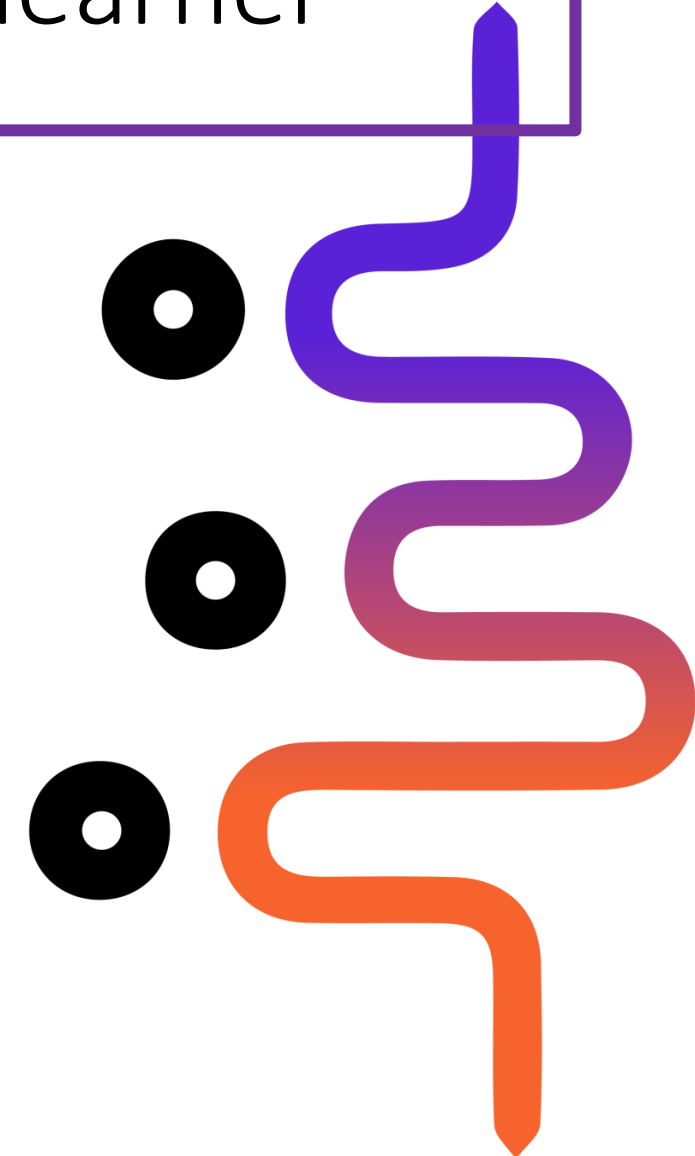


Microcredentials

- Serve as a **bridge** between *formal qualifications* and *non-formal/informal learning experiences*.
- Support **lifelong learning** and **employability** by validating what learners already know and can do

Microcredentials and the learner

- owned by the learner
- can be shared
- are portable.
- may be standalone or combined into larger credentials.
- underpinned by quality assurance following agreed standards in the relevant sector or area of activity.



Why microcredentials?

Update knowledge, skills and competences to fill the gap between formal education and the needs of a fast-changing society and labour market

Insufficient supply of the right skills in the EU labour market.
Need for upskilling and reskilling

People need access to quality teaching and learning provided in different ways and settings, to develop their personal, social, cultural and professional competences.

Education and training systems have been called on to become more flexible and find solutions to deliver more learner-centred, accessible and inclusive learning to a wider range of profiles.

Why

Can play an active role in **delivering EU policy initiatives** to advance the digital and green transition.

Micro-credentials can:

- (i) underpin the goals of the updated Digital Education Action Plan to help provide flexible, accessible learning opportunities for digital skills; and
- (ii) deliver on the targets of the Commission's '2030 Digital Compass' plan to develop a digitally skilled population and highly skilled digital professionals in Europe by 2030.

Micro-credentials can also play a role in delivering on 'The European Green Deal', which is Europe's growth strategy aiming to transform its economy and society and put them on a more sustainable path.

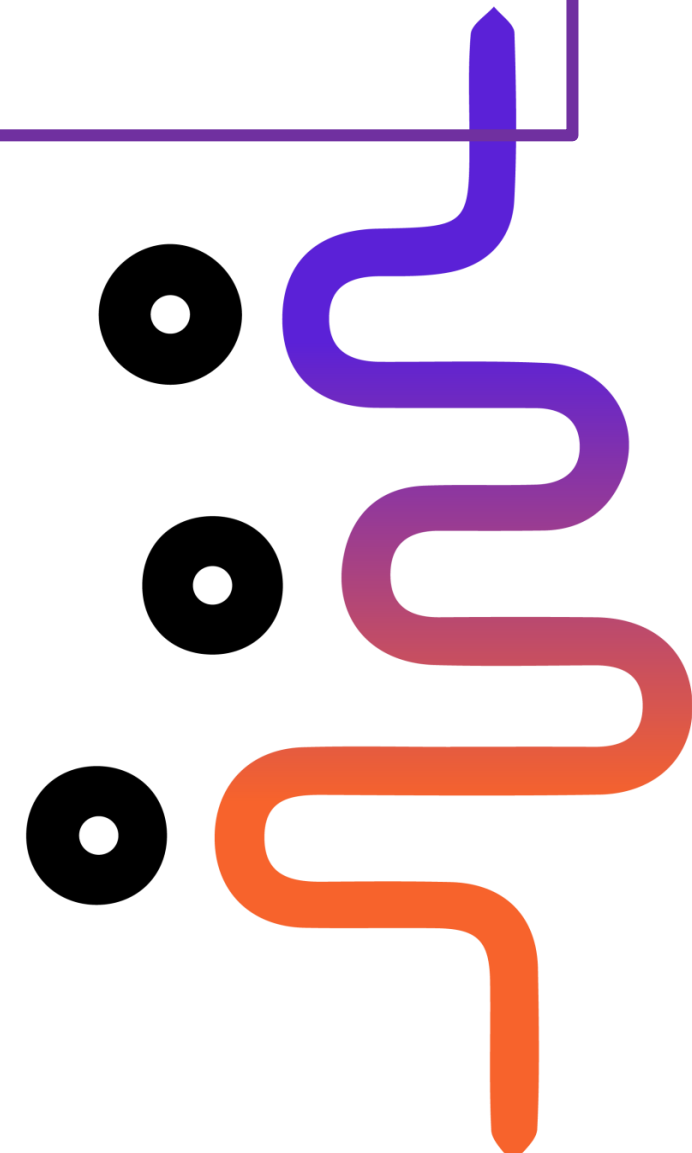
Role in Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning

Provide a standardised framework for recognising learning outcomes achieved outside formal settings.

Allow assessment based on competence frameworks (e.g., EQF, ESCO, DigComp, GreenComp).

Enable evidence-based assessment (portfolios, digital badges, peer review).

Make skills visible, portable, and comparable across institutions and borders.



For example

- A person who gained **project management skills** through volunteering can obtain a microcredential aligned with EQF Level 5 “Project Coordination,” validated by an accredited VET provider.



Examples of application

Universities award stackable microcredentials that validate workplace or community learning.

Adult learners can gain microcredentials for **digital competences (DigComp)** validated through short courses or self-assessment portfolios.

A firm recognises employees' **informal digital skills** (e.g., Canva, social media management) via internal microcredentials that contribute to HRDA-recognised training portfolios.

Benefits from microcredentials

Learners

Recognition of all learning experiences

Flexible, short learning paths

Greater employability

Employers

Transparent skill evidence

Easier talent matching and upskilling

Supports skills-based hiring

Education & Training Systems

Promotes permeability between formal and informal learning

Strengthens **validation frameworks (VNFIL)**

Supports **European lifelong learning policies**

Benefits

- Microcredentials turn invisible learning into visible opportunity.

Structure of microcredentials

Unit 2

Council Recommendation (2022/C 243/02)

- Supports the **European Education Area, Lifelong Learning, and Skills Agenda**
- Facilitates **validation of non-formal and informal learning and stackability** into qualifications
- Implemented through **Europass and Learning Accounts**

Mandatory elements

Identification of the learner

Title of the micro-credential

Country/Region of the issuer

Awarding body

Date of issuing

Learning outcomes

Notional workload needed to achieve the learning outcomes (in ECTS credits if applicable)

Level (and cycle, if applicable) of the learning experience leading to the micro-credential (eg EQF)

Type of assessment

Form of participation in the learning activity

Type of quality assurance used to underpin the microcredential

Optional Elements

Pre-requisites needed
to enrol in the learning
activity

Supervision and
identity verification
during the assessment

Grade achieved

Integration/Stackability
options

Mode of learning
(online, blended, face-
to-face)

Type of recognition of
the microcredential

Language(s) of
instruction and
assessment

Digital format and
metadata (e.g.,
Europass
interoperability)

European Digital Credentials for Learning

- Statements issued by an organisation to a learner, documenting their learning.
 - They include diplomas, transcripts of records and a wide variety of other types of certificates of learning achievement.
 - They are multilingual and signed with a unique electronic seal (that is, the digital equivalent of an institution's rubber stamp). This allows education and training institutions to easily authenticate, validate and recognise credentials of any size, shape or form.
 - They have the same legal validity as paper-based credentials and are recognised throughout the European Education Area.
 - Their built-in instant and automatic authentication and verification checks support recognition and help reduce administrative burdens.
 - Benefits for individuals, employers, and training and education providers.
- <https://webgate.acceptance.ec.europa.eu/europass/edci-viewer/#/home>

A professional gained **project management competences** through volunteer coordination and workplace experience.

Skills are assessed against
EQF Level 5 outcomes

The learner receives a
Microcredential in Project
Coordination indicating
learning outcomes, workload
and assessment type

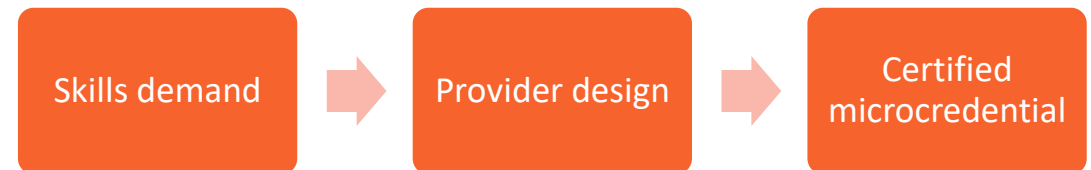
The credential is digitally
stored in EUROPASS, can be
stacked toward a formal VET
qualification

Designing effective microcredentials programmes

Unit 3

The role of learning providers in the development of training programmes leading to microcredentials

- Translate skills needs into short, targeted learning offers.
- Ensure learning outcomes are clearly defined and measurable.
- Align each programme with the European and National Qualification Frameworks (EQF/NQF).
- Establish assessment, quality assurance, and validation procedures.
- Use digital systems (Europass, LMS, e-Certificates) for transparency and recognition.



Learning outcomes [Los] as an important component of microcredentials

- The 2017 EQF Recommendation defines learning outcomes as *'...statements of what an individual should know, understand and/or be able to do at the end of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and responsibility and autonomy'*.



The learning outcomes perspective is used for a number of different purposes, the most important being

Qualification
frameworks and
their level
descriptors

Qualification
standards

Curriculum
development

Assessment and
validation

Quality assurance

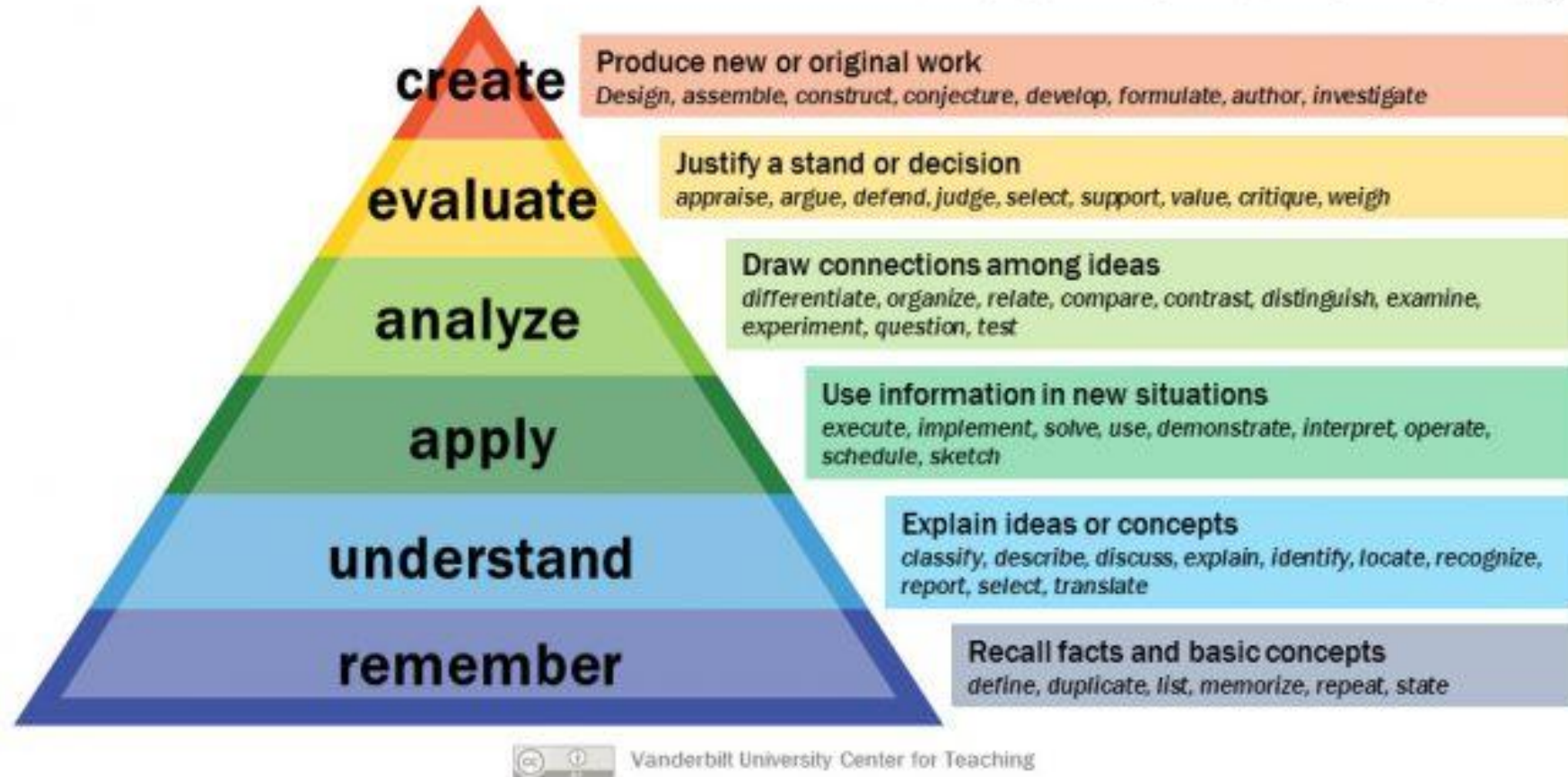
Teaching and
training

Micro-credentials

The Bloom's Taxonomy

- There are different taxonomies – sets of hierarchical models – to classify educational learning goals or objectives.
- The Bloom's taxonomy is used for classification of educational learning objectives into levels of complexity and specificity.
- The list of verbs of the taxonomy was revised in 1990s.

Bloom's Taxonomy



Composing LOs in Terms of...



Points to consider

- Knowledge – Skills – Attitudes/Competences/Abilities (Responsibility and Autonomy)
- Action Verbs (revised Bloom's Taxonomy)
- Examples:

K = To define 'entrepreneurial mindset'.

S = To apply techniques to foster entrepreneurship.

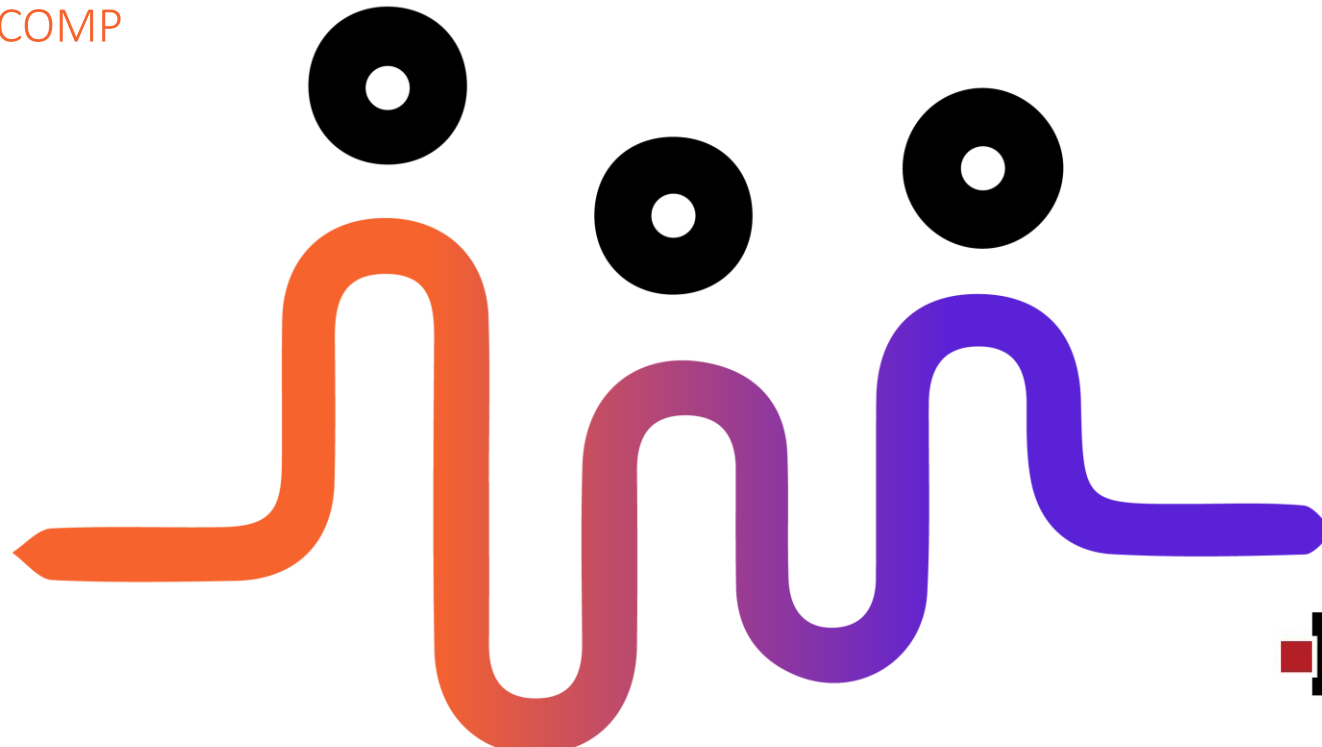
A = To value an entrepreneurial mindset.

Aligned with European Qualification Framework

- Composition of Learning Outcomes
(for Micro-credentials) at Different Levels
of the *European Qualifications Framework (EQF)*

Exercise

- In three groups
 - **Compose three learning outcomes** (one knowledge, one skill and one attitude) for one competence of
 - ENTRECOMP
 - DIGCOMP
 - GREENCOMP



European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

- The EU developed the EQF as a **translation tool** to make national qualifications easier to understand and more comparable (based on the Recommendation on the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning, adopted by the European Parliament and the Council on 2008 (revised in 2017)).
- EQF seeks to support cross-border mobility of learners and workers and to promote lifelong learning and professional development across Europe.
- Microcredentials must be aligned with EQF



Steps to Design a Microcredential Programme

**Identify the
need and
purpose**

**Define
learning
outcomes**

**Design the
curriculum
and learning
activities**

**Develop
assessment
and validation
methods**

**Ensure quality
assurance and
recognition**

Steps to Design a Microcredential Programme



Identify the need and purpose

Analyse **skills gaps** and **target learners** (labour market, societal, or institutional priorities).



Define learning outcomes

Describe what learners will know, understand, and be able to do.

Align with **EQF**, **NQF**, or competence frameworks (e.g. DigComp, GreenComp, EntreComp).



Design the curriculum and learning activities

Structure content into **modules or units**.

Determine workload and format (Define total hours or **ECTS credits**, delivery mode, and schedule)

Choose **learning methods** (face-to-face, online, blended).

Develop learning activities and resources



Develop assessment and validation methods

Design **formative and summative** assessments.

Ensure evidence of competence (e.g., projects, portfolios, simulations)..



Ensure quality assurance and recognition

Embed QA mechanisms (EQAVET).

Define **stackability and recognition pathways**.

Prepare documentation for certification (metadata, digital record).

Ensuring the Portability of Microcredentials

- *Portability* means a microcredential is **transferable and usable across different contexts**, such as between institutions, employers, regions, or EU countries.

Ensuring the Portability of Microcredentials

- Align learning outcomes to European/National Qualification Frameworks (EQF/NQF).
- Express workload in ECTS or equivalent hours.
- Apply recognised quality assurance systems (EQAVET or ESG).
- Use standard metadata and digital formats (Europass, or digital badge).
- Make all information transparent (issuer, assessment, level, outcomes).

Ensuring the Portability of Microcredentials



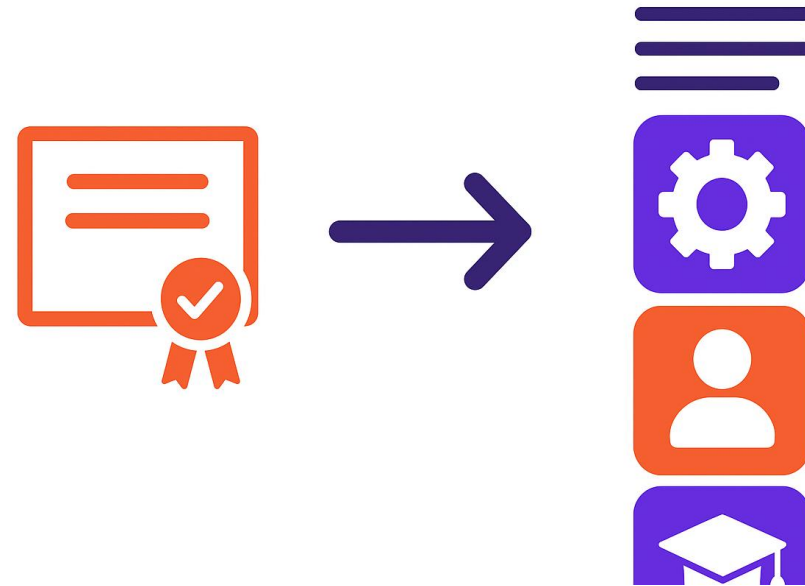
Ensuring the stackability of microcredentials

- *Stackability* means multiple microcredentials can be **combined or accumulated** to form a larger qualification, learning pathway, or professional profile.

Ensuring the stackability of microcredentials

- Define clear links between microcredentials (e.g., part of a qualification).
- Use consistent learning outcome descriptors (knowledge, skills, responsibility).
- Keep assessment standards compatible across microcredentials.
- Coordinate with qualification authorities or awarding bodies for credit recognition.

Stackability

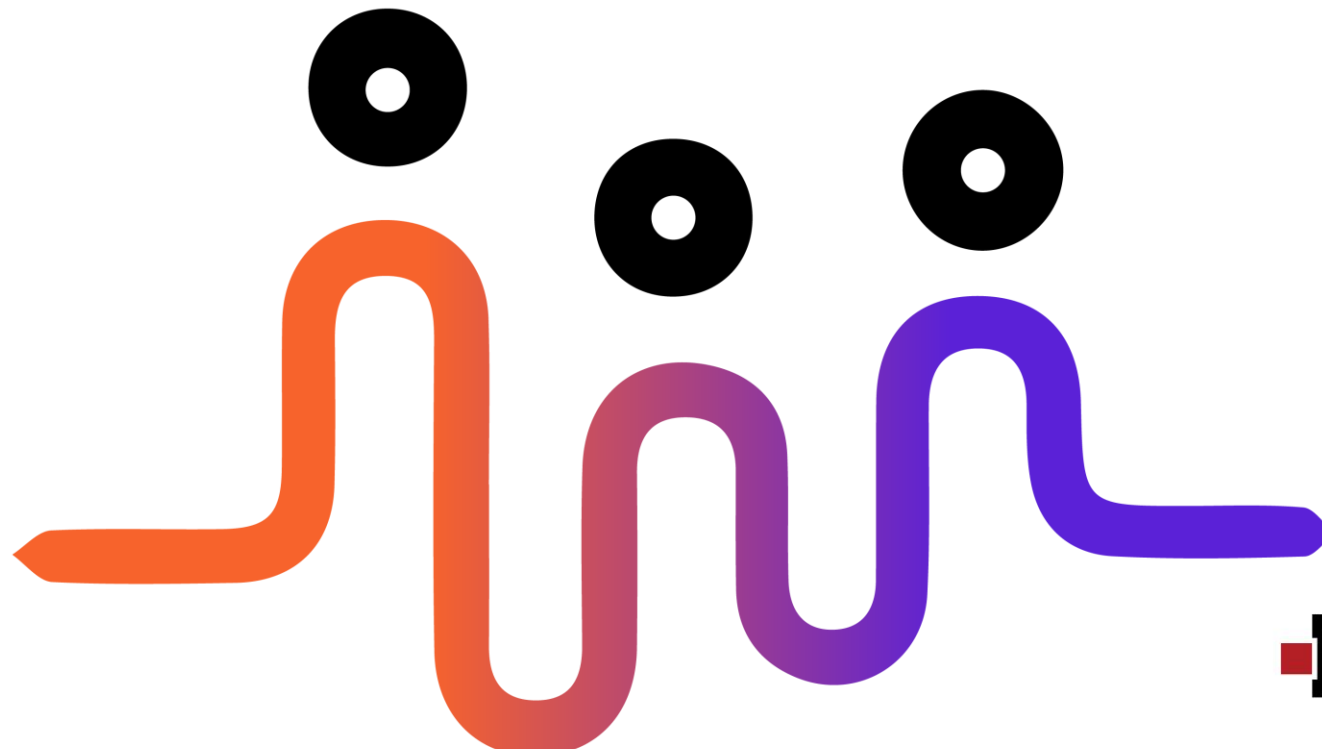


Example for provider- designing a digital skills microcredentials



Exercise: Develop the structure of a microcredential

- Transversal Green skills for any employee

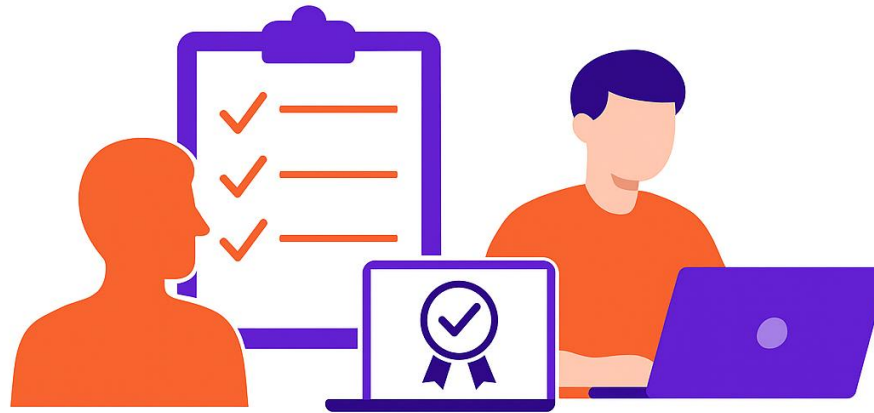


Assessment and Recognition of Non Formal Learning: Strategies for evaluating competencies and skills acquired through nontraditional means.

Unit 4

Strategies for evaluating competencies and skills acquired through nontraditional means

EXPERIENCE → VALIDATION → RECOGNITION

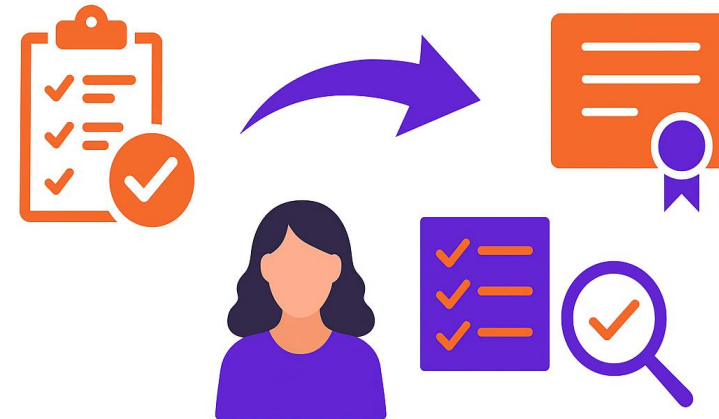


**ASSESSMENT AND RECOGNITION OF
NON-FORMAL LEARNING**

The role of assessment in recognition

- Ensures that skills gained through informal and non-formal learning are credible and comparable to formal qualifications.
- Provides evidence-based validation of learning outcomes.
- Builds trust among employers, education providers, and learners.
- Forms the foundation for issuing microcredentials that are transparent and portable

Assessment and Recognition of Non-Formal Learning



Approaches to Assessment

Learners submit evidence of competence (projects, work outputs, reflection).

Portfolio-based assessment



Assess performance in real or simulated conditions.

Practical demonstration or simulation



Structured assessment of knowledge and understanding.

Written or digital exams



Assess ability to explain and apply knowledge.

Competence interviews



Validation through professional networks or workplace review.

Peer or mentor evaluation



e-portfolios, automated tests, AI-supported validation.

Online/digital assessment tools



From Assessment to Recognition

- **Recognition can lead to:**
 - Credit transfer into formal qualifications (ECTS, EQF-linked programmes)
 - Progression or exemption in further education or training
 - Career advancement or certification of competences by employers or professional bodies
- **And it requires:**
 - Transparent criteria and clear mapping of learning outcomes
 - Qualified assessors and trusted validation procedures
 - Documented and verifiable evidence of achievement
- → **Outcome:** *A recognised microcredential issued to the learner, which can be used for learning or career progression.*

European frameworks supporting recognition

**Council
Recommendation on
Validation of Non-
Formal and Informal
Learning (2012)**

**European
Qualifications
Framework (EQF)**

**Europass Digital
Credentials
Infrastructure**

**Quality frameworks
(EQAVET)**

**Competence
frameworks
(EntreComp, DigComp,
GreenComp, LifeComp)**

Integration of Microcredentials into Existing
Education Systems: Challenges and opportunities.

Unit 5

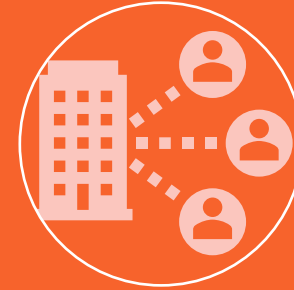
Why Integrating Microcredentials is Important



Creates **flexible learning pathways** between formal, non-formal, and informal learning.



Supports **lifelong learning** and upskilling/reskilling strategies.



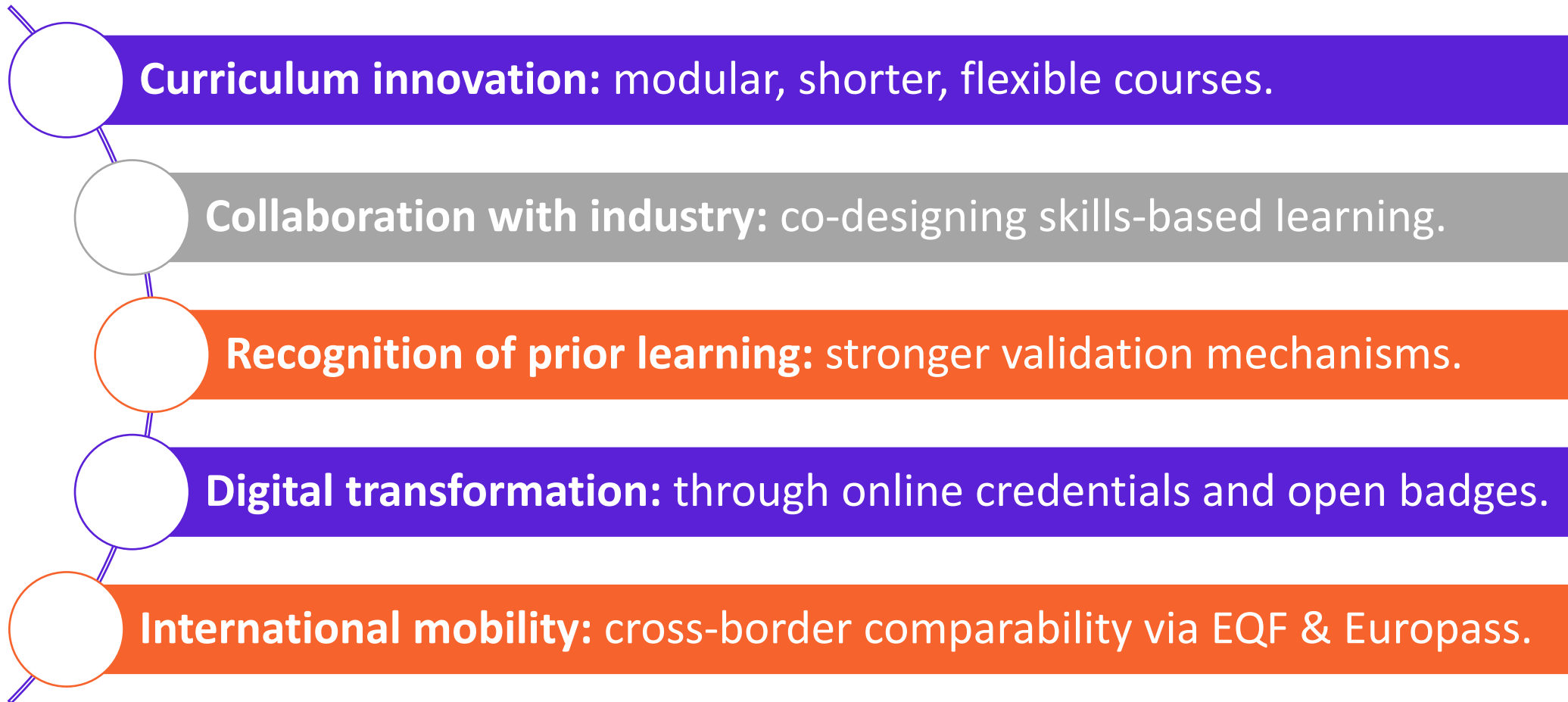
Increases **responsiveness** of education systems to labour market needs.



Enhances **access and inclusion** for adult learners and disadvantaged groups.



Opportunities for education and training systems



Pathways to integration- the goal is different

National or System-Level Integration

- Enable trust, interoperability, and official recognition.

Institutional or Provider-Level Integration

- Create flexible, learner-centred offers aligned with formal systems.

Pathways to integration

National or System-Level Integration

- Establish regulatory frameworks for recognition and quality assurance of microcredentials.
- Define criteria for accreditation and funding eligibility.
- Map microcredentials to NQF/EQF levels and ECTS systems.
- Create national registers or repositories (e.g., linked to Europass).
- Promote policy coherence between VET, higher education, and adult learning.

Institutional or Provider-Level Integration

- Embed microcredentials into curriculum and QA systems.
- Develop staff competences for modular design, assessment, and digital certification.
- Build a culture of microcredentials – promote them to learners and employers.
- Ensure stackability and portability within the institution's programmes.
- Use digital credentialing systems (e.g., Europass, LMS integrations).

Quality Assurance and Accreditation: Ensuring the credibility and validity of microcredentials programs.

Unit 6

Quality Assurance and Accreditation

- Quality assurance ensures that every microcredential issued represents verified, comparable, and meaningful learning — trusted by learners, employers, and education systems.

Why QA and Accreditation Matter

- Builds trust among learners, employers, and institutions
- Enables mutual recognition across borders and sectors
- Aligns with EQAVET, ESG (European Standards and Guidelines), and NQF
- Protects the integrity of the microcredential ecosystem



European Quality frameworks guiding microcredentials

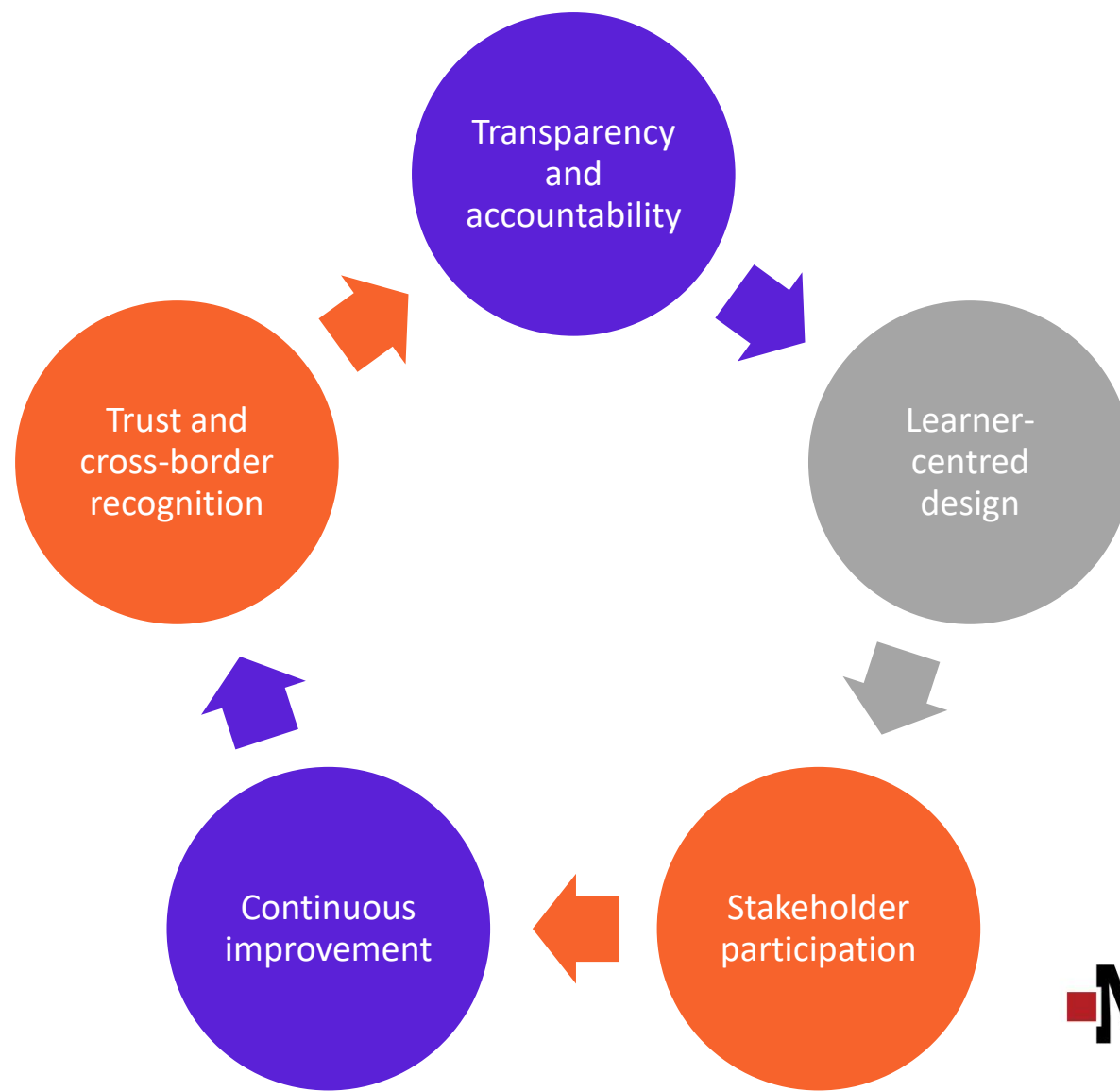
EQAVET (VET context)

- European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training
- **Focus:** Continuous improvement in design, delivery, and assessment of VET
- Built around the PDCA (Plan–Do–Check–Act) cycle
- Key principles: relevance, transparency, feedback, and stakeholder involvement

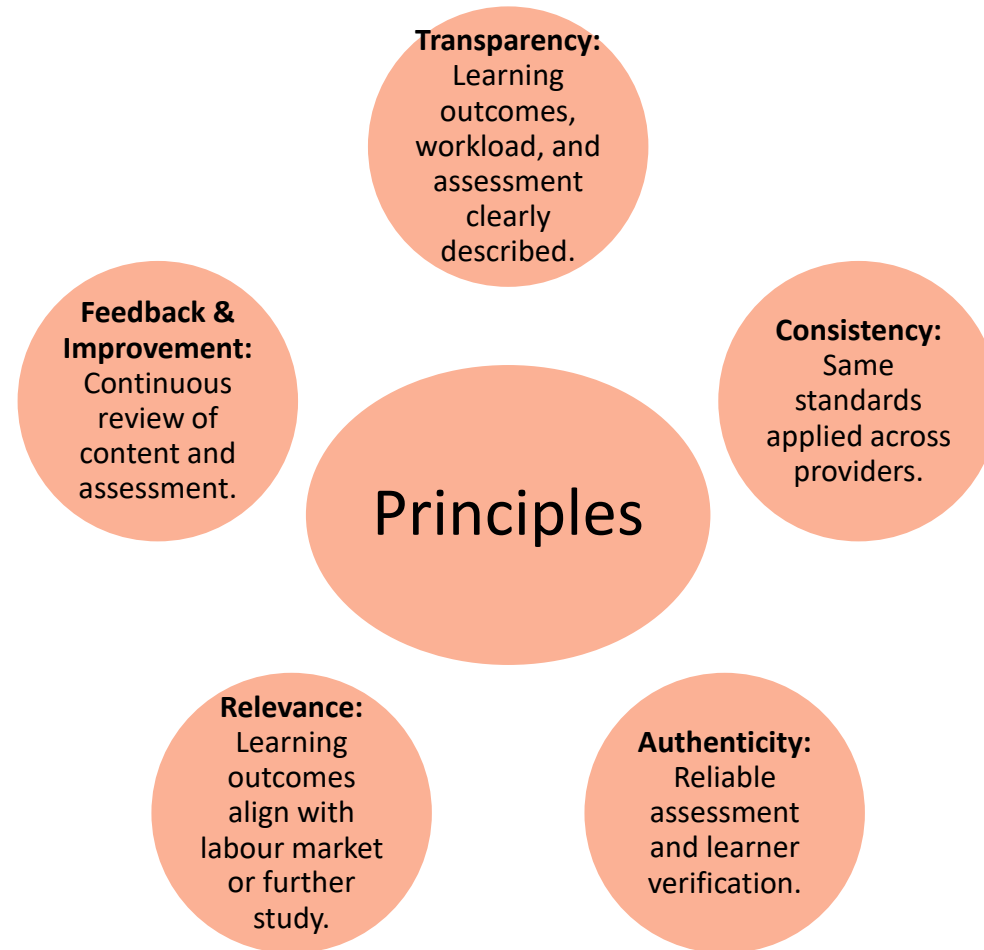
ESG (Higher Education context)

- European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA
- Applied to higher education and short courses
- **Key areas:**
- Internal QA systems within institutions
- External evaluation by QA agencies
- Continuous enhancement and stakeholder participation

Common principles



Core QA principles for microcredentials



Accreditation Models

Integrated model

Microcredentials embedded in existing accredited qualifications (e.g., university modules).

External validation

QA agencies evaluate stand-alone microcredentials (e.g., through NQF, ISO17024 etc).

Provider-level accreditation

Recognised institutions can issue microcredentials under their internal QA systems.

ISO 17024_Certification of persons



Assessment and Certification Standard

Assessments are conducted in accordance with **ISO/IEC 17024:2012** –

Conformity Assessment: General requirements for bodies operating certification of persons.

The **certification scheme** is based on **ISO 17024**.

The objective of these certification scheme is to ensure that professionals have achieved the required **learning outcomes** at the **appropriate level of competence**.

ISO 17024 Certification of persons

- Commitment to Quality and Integrity in Certification
- Our certification process ensures that the evaluation and certification of professionals are:
- Impartial and transparent
- Technically valid and reliable
- Aligned with international best practices



By adopting **ISO/IEC 17024**, we strive to:

- **Enhance the credibility and global recognition** of certified professionals
- **Promote continuous improvement** in our certification practices
- **Ensure fairness, consistency, and objectivity** across all assessments

Rapport Project – Development of the Certification Scheme for Micro-Credentials

A **certification scheme** will be developed to certify the **assessment tools** used for the **micro-credentials**.

The scheme will define the **principles and requirements** for awarding each micro-credential.

ISO 17024 Certification of persons

- **Candidates** will be assessed to verify that they possess the **knowledge, skills, and competences** required for the specific micro-credential.
- The certification scheme will be based on **ISO/IEC 17024:2012 — Conformity assessment: General requirements for bodies operating certification of persons.**



Objectives:

Ensure that professionals have achieved the required **learning outcomes** at the **appropriate level (EQF Level 5)**.

Guarantee quality through **specialized assessment tools** designed for each micro-credential.

The certification scheme will include:

- Scope of certification
- Required competence and abilities (*where applicable*)
- Prerequisites (*where applicable*)
- Code of conduct (*where applicable*)
- Certification documents

Certification process requirements will cover:

- Criteria for **initial certification** and **recertification**
- **Assessment methods** for both stages
- **Surveillance methods and criteria** (*if applicable*)
- Criteria for **suspending or withdrawing certification**
- Criteria for **changing the scope or level of certification** (*if applicable*)



Thank you!