

EUROPEAN APPROACH TO MICRO-CREDENTIALS FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND EMPLOYABILITY

The European Council recommendation on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability was adopted 16 June 2022.

The full text can be read at <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9237-2022-INIT/en/pdf>

OBJECTIVES OF THE RECOMMENDATION:

1. Member States encouraged to adopt a European approach to micro-credentials to:
 - a) Enable individuals to acquire, update, and improve the knowledge, skills, and competences needed to succeed in a changing labour market and society, supporting a fair recovery and transitions to a green and digital economy.
 - b) Support micro-credential providers in enhancing the quality, transparency, accessibility, and flexibility of learning offerings to empower individuals in creating personalized learning and career paths.
 - c) Promote inclusiveness, access, and equal opportunities, contributing to resilience, social fairness, and prosperity for all, considering demographic changes and economic cycles.
2. Member States are encouraged to use micro-credentials, where appropriate, to strengthen and complement existing learning opportunities, increase participation in lifelong learning, and help achieve the target of 60% of adults participating in training annually, as outlined in the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan and supported by the EU leaders and the Council Resolution on the new European agenda for adult learning (2021-2030).

SCOPE OF THE RECOMMENDATION:

1. Micro-credentials and the policies that support their effective design, issuance, and use.
2. Micro-credentials are intended to complement and enhance education, training, lifelong learning, and employability ecosystems. The measures outlined aim to strengthen learning and employability opportunities without disrupting initial, higher education, or vocational education and training (VET) systems, or replacing existing qualifications and degrees. The Recommendation proposes a common European approach to the provision of micro-credentials, including a definition and guidance on their design, issuance, and description to improve quality, transparency, and uptake.

COMMON DEFINITION

Member States are recommended to adopt and promote the use of the definition of micro-credentials as follows: “‘Micro-credential’ means the record of the learning outcomes that a learner has acquired following a small volume of learning. These learning outcomes will 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, and cultural or labour market needs. Micro-credentials are owned by the learner, can be shared and are portable. They may be stand-alone or combined into larger credentials. They are underpinned by quality assurance following agreed standards in the relevant sector or area of activity. “

EUROPEAN STANDARD ELEMENTS TO DESCRIBE A MICRO-CREDENTIAL:

Annex I of the recommendation includes a list of 11 common European standard elements for describing micro-credentials.

Micro-credentials should include the following mandatory elements:

- 1) Identification of the learner
- 2) Title of the micro-credential
- 3) Country(ies)/region(s) of the issuer
- 4) Awarding body(ies)
- 5) Date of issuing
- 6) Learning outcomes
- 7) Notional workload needed to achieve the learning outcomes (in ECTS, where applicable)
- 8) Level (and cycle, if applicable) of the learning experience leading to the micro-credential (as per the European Qualifications Framework or Qualifications Frameworks in the European Higher Education Area, where relevant)
- 9) Type of assessment
- 10) Form of participation in the learning activity
- 11) Type of quality assurance used to underpin the micro-credential

Further details can be found at <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9237-2022-INIT/en/pdf>

EUROPEAN PRINCIPLES FOR THE DESIGN AND ISSUANCE OF MICRO-CREDENTIALS:

Annex II of the recommendation includes a list of 10 principles for the design and issuance of micro-credentials. These highlight the key characteristics of the European approach to micro-credentials that can enable the trust and quality of micro-credentials. The principles are universal and may be applied in any area or sector, if appropriate.

- 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

Further details can be found at <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9237-2022-INIT/en/pdf>

POLICY AND EUROPEAN CONTEXT:

- 1) [Council of the European Union](https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9237-2022-INIT/en/pdf)
<https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9237-2022-INIT/en/pdf>
- 2) [Microbol Framework](https://www.eqar.eu/about/projects/microbol/)
Micro-credentials linked to the Bologna Key Commitments (Microbol) – EQAR
<https://www.eqar.eu/about/projects/microbol/>
- 3) [European Union Higher Education package: a first step on a long journey - European Students' Union](https://esu-online.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/European-Union-Higher-Education-package_-a-first-step-on-a-long-journey.pdf)
https://esu-online.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/European-Union-Higher-Education-package_-a-first-step-on-a-long-journey.pdf
- 4) Policy Statement on Micro-Credentials
<https://esu-online.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Statement-on-Micro-credentials.pdf>