



European Forum  
of Technical and Vocational  
Education and Training

## **EfvET Position Paper**

### **Micro-credentials - From conceptualisation to active implementation in Vocational Education and Training (VET)**

The micro-credentials (MCs) can form the basis for responding to the unavoidable requirement to reskill and upskill a minimum of [60% of adults each year by 2030](#) to be able to meet all the time faster changing requirement of the European and also global working life. The objective is to support the achievement of the priorities stated on the [European Skills Agenda](#), including the [European Green Deal](#) and the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#).

Digitalisation and the green transition will challenge all education to adapt quickly to the changes and also VET providers are forced to admit that there is no time to lose during the following years, if it is about playing a significant role in those developments. From foresights constructed by artificial intelligence (AI) – a good example of a brand-new and very dynamic tool that we can use in all kinds of situations - we already may predict that full qualifications will be less relevant, possibly in a dramatic way for some parts of the labour market. That means that the formal education system of today may be falling behind if the sector can't find the right answers for scenarios that are needed for other forms, formats and approaches in providing education and training, having lifelong learning as a key-issue for every country. Yet, for instance in Finland, only approximately 13% of adult learners in VET education carry out partial qualifications or MCs. Thus, it will be essential to reach the [European Education Area](#) by 2025 and follow the [Digital Education Action Plan](#) as effectively as possible until 2027.

VET already plays a prominent role in supporting the development of future skills for the next generations and in accompanying students and teachers, who also have to come back to college and who are in need of different new skills and competences for providing new types of qualifications. Keeping the VET sector up to date for those target groups is what at the national level is expected by all stakeholders.

EfvET is strongly involved in that part of the education system that provides courses and training programmes, also non-credit and non-formal, related to employment with a view to enable the transition from secondary education into the labour market and the need for updated skills for alumni. EfvET aims to contribute to the economic and cultural life in Europe through the advancement of lifelong learning with high vocational and vocational education and training at all levels, also parallel to the higher education sector, in Europe and beyond.

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This position paper is based on the survey conducted in the beginning of November 2022 among the members of EfVET, and the policy debate concerning MCs held in Brussels on November 30<sup>th</sup> in the scope of the [LLL Week 2022](#), and in that way the recommendations for further development of MC's are set forth. The steering of the strategic implementation of MCs in VET Systems across Europe is seen as one of the tasks of the European Commission, including both DG GROW and DG EMPL, at the macro level, to provide a framework that can be used by the Member States. EfVET members provide a bridge between the industry and the HVET/VET sector at the national and regional level by means of developing and implementing education programs regarding the new trends.

In this position paper, the need for steering/guiding the national implementation of “next generation” MCs is approached from three main dimensions: labour market, education providers and individual learners. The current challenges in all these areas are recognised and the support of the European Commission towards the national level institutions to go forth in the form of possible solutions is recommended. The attitudes and awareness about the possibilities by individual learners form the basis of a successful education system improvement, including the wide implementation of MCs into the national education strategies, especially having the VET systems in mind. Thus, this position paper starts with improvement suggestions concerning individual learners and MCs.

## **Challenges and recommendations concerning individual learners and the implementation of MCs**

### ***Individual approach***

The main challenge from an individual learner's point of view seems to be the missing awareness and the access to possible MCs to upskill oneself. Also, the benefits of the MCs are not well-known by individuals or they do not seem to be very transparent. As such, our recommendations to fill this gap are the following:

- First, a lot more information concerning the possibilities that MCs could offer for an individual learner should be provided across Europe, using the national channels for this, and with support of the VET Colleges.
- Second, artificial intelligence (AI) and other digital based solutions have to be implemented in all EU member countries to gather information on all accessible MCs and, last but not least,
- Third, there should be a process implemented to guarantee the quality required if it would be integrated in the formal education system.

### ***Labour market approach***

The main challenge of the implementation of MCs from the labour market point of view is the fact that there are already thousands of MCs, and the competences and learning outcomes they

provide are not straightforward enough or in a lot of cases the name of the MC does not describe well enough the content.

There is a need to stimulate more policy debate at all levels around the topic of MCs in order to understand how this tool can be used and further implemented in the labour market, by big companies, small and medium-sized enterprises and also self-employed workers. The standard elements that are mandatory to be part of the European approach to MCs are to stimulate the awareness about this tool and to make use of it in a way that makes sense to all people/stakeholders involved, a perspective with which EfVET is fully aligned.

On the grassroot level, it is essential that local/regional stakeholders (Chambers, trade unions, associations of entrepreneurs, employers' organisations, etc.) have also continuous discussions on how to proceed with MCs and to find balanced roles between the providers (private/public).

#### *VET Providers' approach*

From VET Providers' perspective, the main challenge is, and will be, to get sufficient financial and human resources in the form of qualified experts, and learning counsellors to be involved in the provision of relevant MCs. Furthermore, the connection between VET providers and others providing similar kinds of MCs may be a challenge if it is about the quality of them, also if they are linked to formal and full qualifications and a level of an National Qualifications Framework.

The balance between fostering trust and transparency and preserving flexibility will be the key when defining MCs as part of formal education systems. The discussion at national level has now emerged in some EU countries, but there are still a lot of questions to be solved in a situation that can be characterized as very diverse and not transparent enough. However, a lot is already being done and benchmarking between EfVET members is essential to help creating the added value needed for full implementation of MCs in VET.

Moreover, an effective national/European database built around AI is needed to offer full transparency and equality to all learners (and employers). This is needed for international collaboration between VET Colleges, labour mobility and projects that will help Europe and its Member States to get more insights in the use of MCs.

Thus, is it necessary to:

- Make sure the investment in the development of skills and training is made, including in the validation of micro-credentials that target specific sectors suffering from labour shortage.
- Take into consideration that all learning outcomes are valued in a clear and transparent way across EU Member States and can be part of broader certifications.

#### *International approach*

It is important to keep an eye on the developments concerning the use of MCs in the coming years. This can be done on the basis of the way in which national governments apply the frameworks and criteria, based on what has been provided by the European Commission. Within

EfVET, the national networks can be used to review the approach and strategy, leading to additional studies into similarities and also differences in legislation. It can be examined what this means for the international cooperation of VET Colleges, but also for lifelong learning.

It is clear that each Member State is looking for the embedding of MCs and similar forms of small units for learning outcomes throughout the education system. In EfVET we want to see whether there are characteristic differences for the VET sector, the national Higher Education (HE) area and the way in which the business community and employers deal with, for example, certificates that are linked to MCs and possibly also an National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

Specific attention can be paid to the implementation of MCs within the Higher VET sector when it comes to shaping flexible learning paths that lead to following a programme in Higher Education. Being able to use MCs for a smooth transition, they need to have a recognized position and approach within the system. VET Colleges and HE institutions can set up partnerships for this purpose. EfVET will be able to shape and implement a possible approach in international cooperation with other Associations.

### **Final conclusions**

As an extensive platform representing VET providers, EfVET is committed to organise the following relevant initiatives during the course of 2023, which priority is to be set up by the members of EfVET:

- Policy Debates with Members and other EU institutions/organisations that address the matter (e.g. ETF, Cedefop, etc.);
- Roundtables with Members to collect information about best practices related to the implementation of MCs and evaluation of their effectiveness;
- International projects (e.g. Erasmus+ KA2/KA3) to support the implementation of MCs;
- Specialised webinars /seminars/discussions during an online coffee breaks;
- Include this topic to *Coaches and Athletes* initiative as a good practice;
- Articles/ Policy Statements about the impact of MCs on VET Systems;
- Deepened surveys on MCs among the members.

These initiatives support the steering of the implementation of MCs and guideline the recommendations given to the Member States concerning the tools and methods to be used by the VET providers around Europe.

Also, EfVET will include in its explorations an in-depth analysis of the existing international assessment tools and methods, an international Conference in 2023 for exchange of best practices around MCs, strict EU monitoring scheme for the implementation on national level with regular reporting on the state-of-the-art and roundtables and practical workshops related with MC's stressing 5 W's - Why, What, Who, When, Where.

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