



# **GUIDE ON HOW TO APPLY MICRO-CREDENTIALS TO LEARNING PATHWAYS FOR CCS**



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## GUIDE ON HOW TO APPLY MICRO-CREDENTIALS TO LEARNING PATHWAYS FOR CCS

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### PROJECT PARTNERS



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# Understanding the terminology

1. **LEP (Local Ecosystem Partnership):** A collaborative business strategy that focuses on building and maintaining partnerships among companies, organisations, and individuals within a specific geographic region or market. This approach acknowledges the interconnectedness and interdependence of businesses, and that collaboration and cooperation can lead to greater innovation, efficiency, and growth. In the context of the SACCORD project, LEPs are designed to widen and anchor the European Commission's Pact for Skills on regional levels by fostering mutual recognition and collaboration among partners at different stages of the supply chain within a given geographic region.
2. **ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System):** is a tool of the **European Higher Education Area** for making studies and courses more transparent. It helps students to move between countries and to have their academic qualifications and study periods abroad recognised. ECTS allows credits taken at one higher education institution to be counted towards a qualification studied for at another. ECTS credits represent learning based on defined learning outcomes and their associated workload. 60 ECTS credits are the equivalent of a full year of study or work. In a standard academic year, these credits are usually broken down into several smaller modules<sup>1</sup>.
3. **CCI** – Cultural and Creative Industries
4. **LSP** – Large-Scale Skills Partnership
5. **EQF** – European Qualifications Framework
6. **QF-EHEA** – Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area
7. **QA** – Quality Assurance
8. **RPL** – Recognition of Prior Learning
9. **VET** – Vocational Education and Training
10. **HEI** – Higher Education Institution
11. **ESG** – Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
12. **EQAVET** – European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training
13. **NQF** – National Qualifications Framework
14. **NLQF** – Dutch National Qualifications Framework

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission. (2022, September 13). European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). European Education Area. Retrieved June 23, 2025, from <https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/inclusive-and-connected-higher-education/european-credit-transfer-and-accumulation-system>

15. **AQ Austria** – Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria
16. **OECD** – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
17. **EU Skills Agenda** – European Skills Agenda (EU policy framework for skills development)
18. **Pact for Skills** – EU-wide initiative under the European Skills Agenda to promote co-operation on skills development
19. **MCs** – Micro-credentials
20. **HE** – Higher Education
21. **R&I** – Research and Innovation



# 1 CONTEXT

## 1. Embarking on a Journey: Our Project's Vision and Direction

### 1.1. Charting Our Path: An Overview of the Project

The SACCORD project was conceived from a clear need to bolster the European Skills Agenda, particularly within the dynamic Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs). Its very name, combining “SKILLS” and “ACCORDANCE,” reflects its core aim: to unite professionals, organisations, and networks to collaboratively enhance the skills of Europe’s creative talent. A major driving force for the project is to build upon the momentum of the existing Large-Scale Skills Partnership (LSP) for CCIs, supporting this voluntary flagship initiative of the European Commission by expanding its reach to local and regional levels through “Local Ecosystem Partnerships” (LEPs). The SACCORD project is supported also by the Creative Pact for Skills collaborative framework for skills development across Europe and is driven by a clear need: the CCI must innovate. This means embracing new learning methods, such as micro-credentials, to rapidly bridge crucial skill gaps in vital areas such as the European Green Transition, Digitalisation, and Entrepreneurial action.

### 1.2. Navigating the Landscape: Objectives of This Guide

SACCORD plays a central role in informing and shaping this guide to facilitate the transition from the theoretical understanding to the practical application of micro-credentials for learning activities within the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs). Think of it as a bridge, moving from just understanding what micro-credentials are to putting them into practice.

As a living document, this guide encourages ongoing discussion and refinement within the Large-Scale Skills Partnership (LSP). It is designed to evolve through collaborative input and real-world application, ensuring its continued relevance and effectiveness in addressing the unique challenges and opportunities within the CCIs.

Through the integration of theory and practice, this guide intends to assist all CCIs stakeholders in

adopting, comprehending, and acknowledging micro-credentials, thereby promoting wider adoption across the sector. Micro-credentials can also be utilized to foster innovation, enhance career prospects, and support lifelong learning.



## 2 OBJECTIVES

## 2. The ‘Why’ Behind This Guide

### 2.1. Europe’s Broader Skills Shortage

Across Europe employers are finding it harder to attract and retain staff with the right skill sets. This is reflected in the growing job vacancy rate in the European Union, with Germany in particular being highlighted as a country experiencing an acute shortage of qualified workers. This circumstance poses significant challenges across various sectors, including the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI). This shortage is driven by several interrelated factors<sup>2</sup>:

- **Contributing Factors:** Labor shortages are a result of both long-standing issues (declining populations, underinvestment in education, job mismatches) and emerging factors (rapid rise of automation and AI increasing demand for skilled labor).
- **Low Unemployment and High Vacancy Rates:** Unemployment in the EU has dropped to new lows (6% in 2024), while the job vacancy rate in the Eurozone is around 2% (higher in some countries), indicating a lack of available workers for open positions.
- **Difficulty Finding Talent:** A significant percentage of employers (86% in Germany in 2025) report difficulty in finding talented candidates.
- **Impact of Retirement:** A long-term trend of many Europeans entering retirement in the 2020s is exacerbating labor shortages, as there are not enough workers with the appropriate skills to replace them.

### 2.2. Skills Shortage in the Creative Sector

The Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) stand as vital pillars of modern society, driving not only economic prosperity but also cultural enrichment and social development. However, these industries face unique and persistent skills shortages that act as a significant impediment to their

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<sup>2</sup> Espinosa, C. (2025, May 29). Labor and skills shortages in Europe - statistics & facts. Statista. Retrieved June 4, 2025, from <https://www.statista.com/topics/11864/labor-and-skills-shortages-in-europe/#topicOverview>



ability to innovate, adapt, and achieve sustainable growth.

Several interconnected factors contribute to the skills shortages experienced by the CCI. These factors extend beyond typical labor market dynamics and are deeply rooted in the unique characteristics and evolving nature of the creative sector. Key contributors include:

- **Rapid Technological Advancements:** The CCI are profoundly influenced by rapid technological changes, particularly in areas like digital media, virtual reality, artificial intelligence, and data analytics. The pace of these advancements often outstrips the ability of educational and training systems to equip individuals with the necessary skills. This leads to a constant demand for professionals with cutting-edge technical abilities and the capacity to adapt to emerging tools and platforms.
- **Evolving Business Models and Industry Practices:** The CCI are characterized by diverse and evolving business models, encompassing freelance work, project-based employment, and small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Traditional job roles are being redefined, and there's a growing demand for hybrid skills that combine creative expertise with entrepreneurial acumen, project management capabilities, and digital literacy. This necessitates flexible and adaptable learning pathways that can respond to the dynamic needs of the industry.
- **Lack of Formalized Training and Recognition:** Many skills crucial to the CCI, such as artistic expression, creative problem-solving, and storytelling, are often developed through informal channels, apprenticeships, or personal experience. This can create challenges in standardizing and recognizing these skills, making it difficult for employers to assess candidates' qualifications and for individuals to demonstrate their competence. This also leaves a gap in formalized training and pathways for acquiring these skills systematically, which is not reflected in formal training institutions.



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## UNDERSTANDING MICRO CREDENTIALS

### 3. Micro-Credentials Explained: What They Are and Why They Matter

#### 3.1. Definition

Around the world, various organizations are responding to the growing demand for flexible educational delivery methods and lifelong learning opportunities. A wide range of alternative credentials, such as NanoDegrees, MicroMasters, and Micro-degrees, are now available. Early research by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) in 2021, alongside a review of literature on micro-credentials, revealed ongoing discussions among stakeholders to define and understand these new credentials. Currently, there is no universally accepted definition for micro-credentials, with many versions in circulation that sometimes conflict.

However, getting the inspiration from the definition proposed by the European Commission, micro-credential specifically tailored for the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs), as defined by the SACCORD project, is “a record of the knowledge, skills, and competencies that a learner has acquired and demonstrated following a focused learning experience. These learning outcomes are assessed against transparent standards. And they are relevant to the specific needs of the creative and cultural sectors, including societal, personal, cultural, and labour market demands. Micro-credentials are owned by the learner, portable, and can be combined into larger qualifications. They are underpinned by quality assurance processes that adhere to agreed standards within the CCIs”.

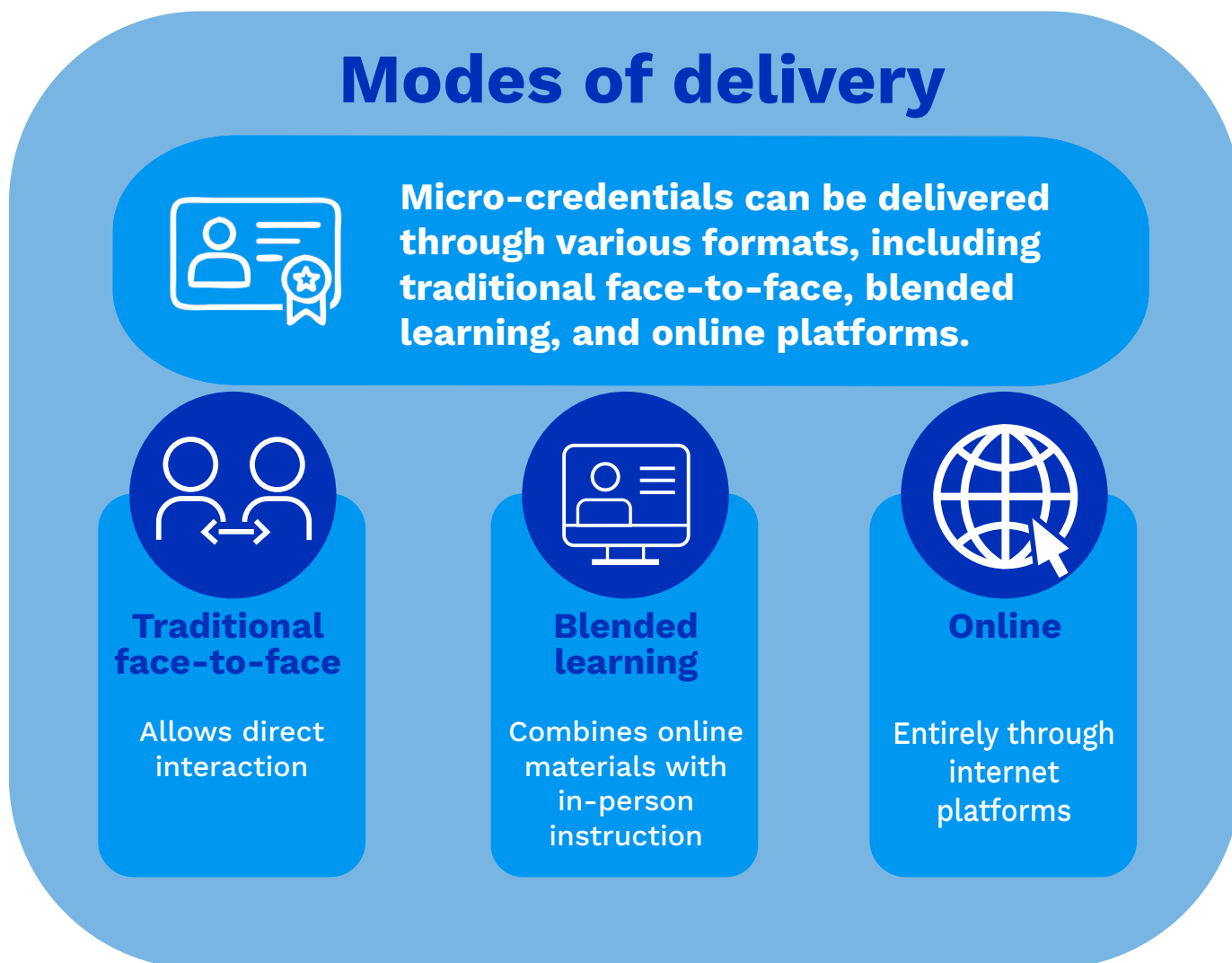
### 3.2. Value Proposition

Micro-credentials serve as concise records of learners' skills and competencies, verified through focused learning experiences. They are particularly suited to the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) due to the sector's fragmented and diverse nature. Creative professionals often have hybrid profiles, requiring a mix of formal, non-formal, vocational, higher education, and work-based training pathways. These credentials provide a powerful framework to enhance skill recognition, support lifelong learning, and align educational outcomes with industry needs. The value they offer includes:

- **Recognition and Validation of Skills:** Micro-credentials offer a way to formally recognize and validate skills and competencies acquired through formal, non-formal, and informal learning, which is particularly relevant in the CCIs where skills are often developed outside traditional education pathways.
- **Enhanced Employability and Mobility:** By providing a clear and standardized way to showcase skills, micro-credentials can enhance the employability and mobility of CCIs professionals, both within and outside the EU.
- **Skills Transparency and Recognition:** Micro-credentials can increase skills transparency and recognition, making it easier for employers to identify and hire individuals with the specific skills they need.
- **Lifelong Learning and Upskilling:** Micro-credentials can support lifelong learning and upskilling by providing a flexible and accessible way for CCIs professionals to acquire new skills and knowledge throughout their careers.
- **Bridging the Gap between Education and Industry:** Micro-credentials can help bridge the gap between education and industry by ensuring that education and training programs are aligned with the needs of the CCIs.

### 3.3. Features of Micro-credentials: Unlocking Flexible Learning

#### 3.3.1. Modes of Delivery



### 3.3.2. Duration and Pace

## Duration and pace



**Micro-credentials offer a flexible, accelerated learning experience compared to traditional degree programs.**



### **Flexible schedules**

Typically range from 10 to 14 weeks or 100–150 hours



### **Variable pacing**

Rapid or gradual skill acquisition



### **MOOCs**



Platforms like Coursera and edX offer thousands of courses

### 3.3.3. Validation Procedures

## Quality-Assured Assessments in Micro-Credentials

### Quality-Assured Assessments Beyond Attendance

Providers ensure assessment methods are documented and suitable for evaluating learning outcomes.

### Assessment Methods

**Project-Based Learning**



**Problem-Solving Tasks**



**Practical Simulations**



### EU Council Process

Identification

Documentation

Assessment

Certification



### Key Roles

#### Issuing Body

Defines learning outcomes, develops curriculum, conducts assessments



### Issuing Authority

#### Issuing Authority

Sets the framework for recognizing micro-credentials

### 3.3.4. Content and Focus Areas

Micro-credentials provide diverse learning opportunities tailored to current job market demands. These programs range from foundational skills, like communication and language fluency, to intermediate proficiencies, such as software use and project management. They also offer specialized training for niche roles, like educators, enhancing technical and non-cognitive skills, including resilience and effective learning strategies.

### 3.3.5. Integration and Stackability Possibilities

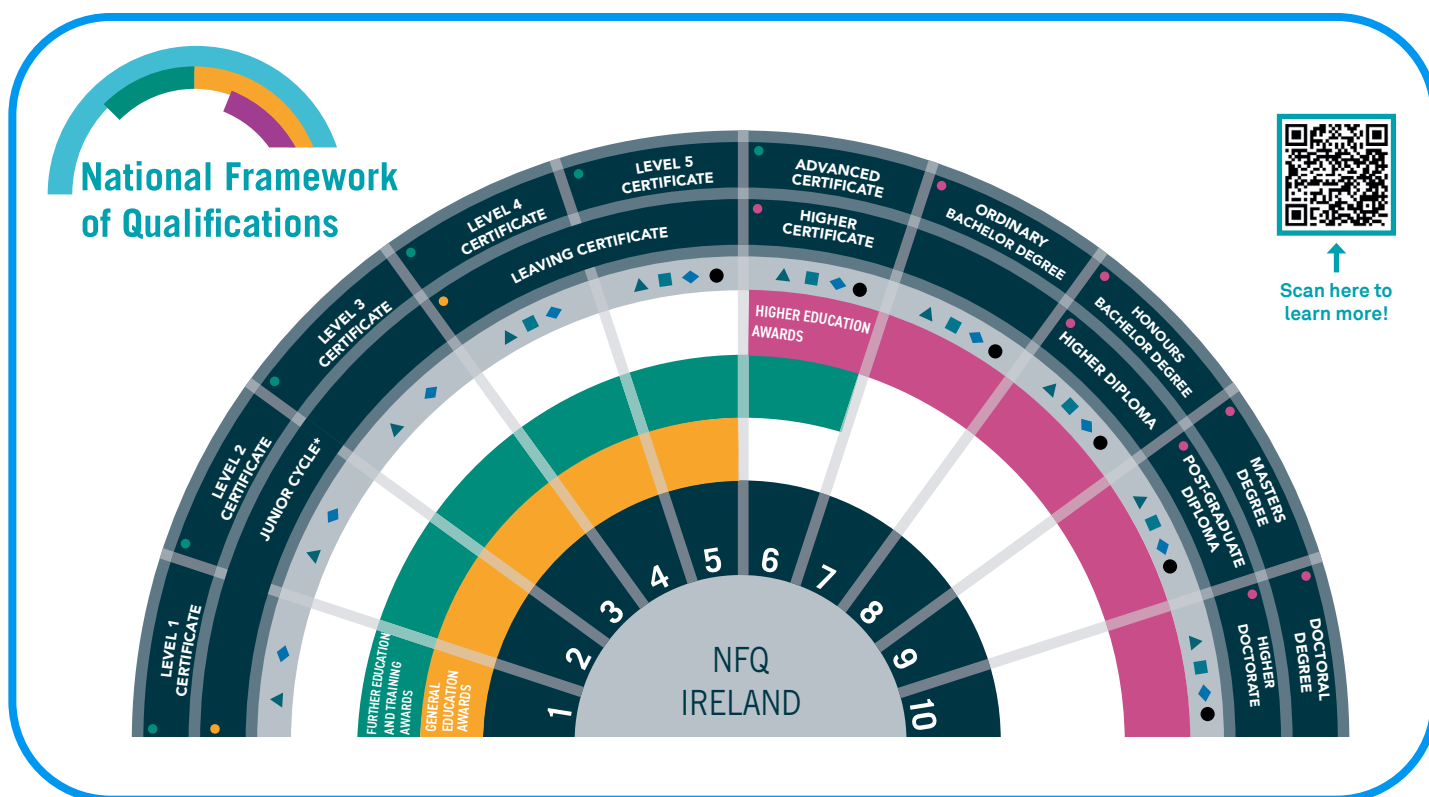
Integrating micro-credentials into national qualifications frameworks enhances their value and recognition. Successful integration requires collaboration among educational institutions, government agencies, and industry stakeholders to adjust existing frameworks and accreditation processes.

### **Pioneering Micro-Credential Adoption: Ireland and New Zealand**



## Ireland

Ireland has successfully incorporated micro-credentials into its national education system, positioning them as Minor Awards, Supplemental Awards, and Special Purpose Awards. These roles allow micro-credentials to fulfill partial outcomes for major awards or provide specialized skills at any level. This modular approach offers flexible learning pathways that cater to diverse learner needs, fostering workforce skills and lifelong learning.



### CLASSES OF AWARD



**Major Awards:** named in the outer rings, are the principal class of awards made at a level



**Minor Awards:** are for partial completion of the outcomes for a Major Award



**Supplemental Awards:** are for learning that is additional to a Major Award



**Special Purpose Awards:** are for relatively narrow or purpose-specific achievement



**Professional Awards:** are for occupation-orientated qualifications including apprenticeships

\*Please refer to NCCA website, [ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle/](https://ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle/)

### IRISH REGISTER OF QUALIFICATIONS

For more information on

- Qualifications
- Providers
- Courses

visit [www.irq.ie](https://www.irq.ie)

**Figure 1.** National Framework of Qualifications in Ireland

Source: (Quality and Qualifications Ireland, n.d.)<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Quality and Qualifications Ireland. (n.d.). National Framework of Qualifications. Quality and Qualifications Ireland. <https://www.qqi.ie/what-we-do/the-qualifications-system/national-framework-of-qualifications>

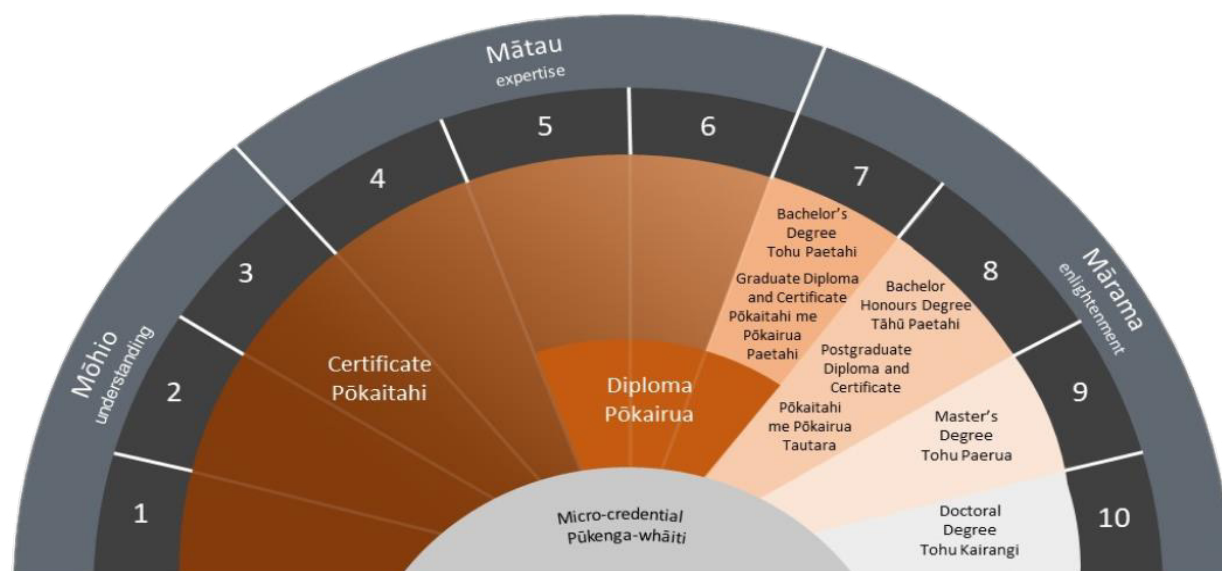




## New Zealand

In 2018, New Zealand became a global pioneer in integrating micro-credentials into its regulated education system. Universities in New Zealand can independently develop and approve micro-credentials, categorized into three primary use cases: as pathways to full qualification enrollment, for upskilling employees, career changers, and non-working learners, and to address emerging skill needs in the job market. This approach highlights New Zealand's commitment to flexible, accessible learning that meets diverse and evolving industry demands.

The New Zealand Qualifications Framework integrates micro-credentials from level 1 to level 10, providing comprehensive coverage across the educational system. At the 2023 QQI NFQ 20th Anniversary Conference, a delegate from the New Zealand Qualifications Authority presented a preliminary diagram of this framework, exemplifying NZ's holistic approach to education and skills development.



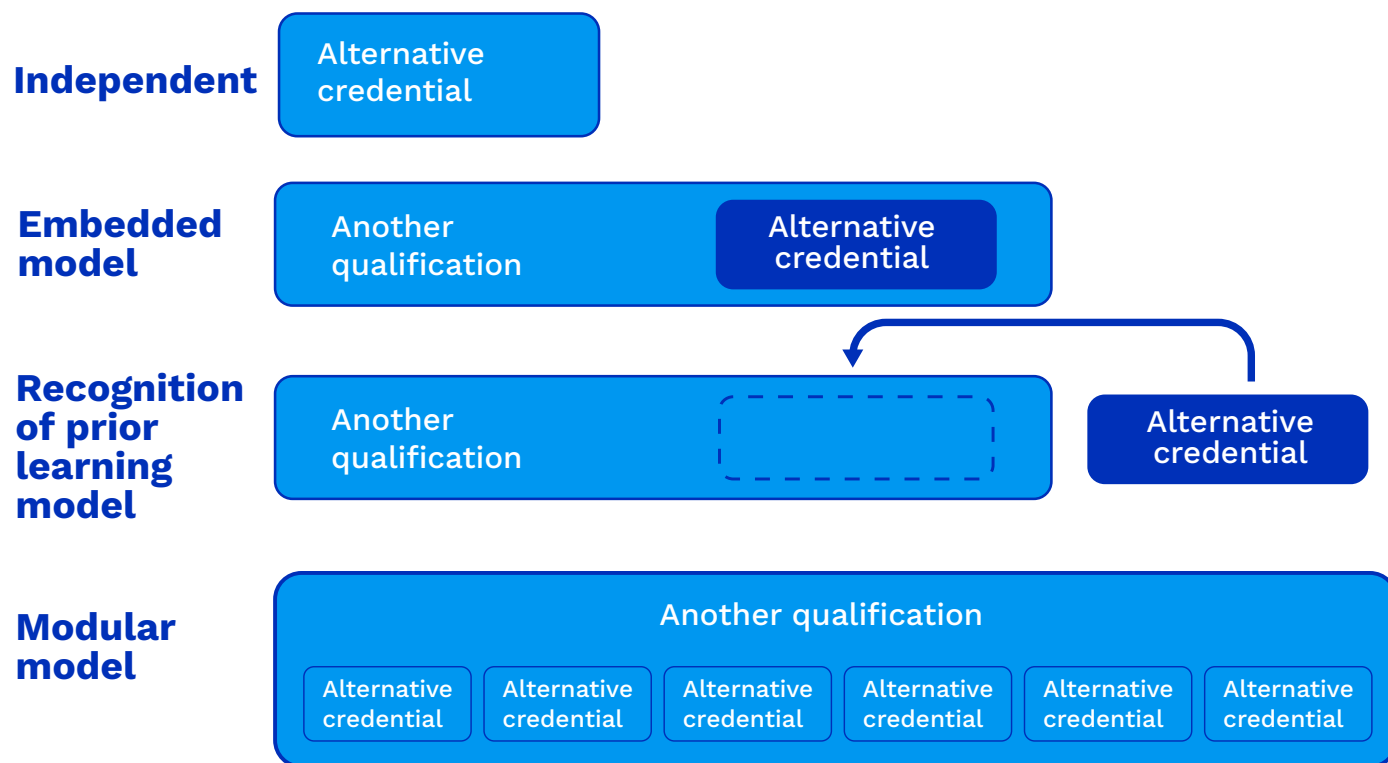
<sup>^</sup>Draft diagram, pending consultation.

**Figure 2.** New Zealand Qualifications and Credentials Framework  
Source: (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, n.d.)<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> New Zealand Qualifications Authority. (n.d.). Future opportunities for National Qualification Frameworks. Quality and Qualifications Ireland. Retrieved March 28, 2024, from <https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2023-11/nfq-20th-anniversary-2023-presentation-slides.pdf>

### 3.3.6. Different Models to Integrate Micro-Credentials

Micro-credentials can serve as standalone achievements or be integrated into larger qualification pathways through several models. According to an OECD report on alternative credentials, there are three main integration models:



**Figure 4.** Three Models for Integrating Alternative Credentials into Another Qualification Programme

**1. Embedded Model:** Micro-credentials are integrated into existing qualification programs as part of the curriculum. Students complete these credentials after joining the qualification program, providing structured learning within their broader academic path.

**2. Recognition of Prior Learning Model:** Micro-credentials are earned before entering a qualification program and can be retrospectively recognized for academic credit. For example, Kiron offers refugees a MOOC-based program that allows earning credits towards university degrees. The Google IT Support Professional Certificate on Coursera offers students college credit upon completion.

**3. Modular Model:** Micro-credentials serve as individual modules that contribute to a larger qualification. Programs like Coursera's MasterTrack® Certificate and edX's MicroMasters® offer courses that count towards a Master's degree upon acceptance into full programs.

The concept extends to joint degrees offered by partnerships of universities, enhancing international education collaboration. Recently, the European Commission proposed initiatives for a European degree, encouraging cross-border university cooperation and promoting educational mobility within the EU.

### 3.4. Standard elements of a micro-credential

The foundation of trust in micro-credentials lies in transparency. They should be clearly labelled as such, equipped with elements that allow learners, educational institutions, quality assurance agencies, and employers to understand their value and content, facilitating comparison. However, the absence of regulation in micro-credentials sets them apart from much of the education system, resulting in considerable variability in quality and transparency. This lack of oversight often leaves learners comparing micro-credentials with incomplete information. To address this challenge, establishing minimum standards through a framework can empower learners to make informed decisions when choosing micro-credentials, ensuring critical information requirements are met. For instance, the European approach to micro-credentials proposes a set of essential information elements that every micro-credential should offer. More details are shown in **Table 1 as below:**

**Table 1.**

Mandatory and Optional Elements for Describing Micro-credentials according to EU Standard

Mandatory Elements	Optional elements, where relevant (non-exhaustive list)
Identification of learner	Prerequisites needed to enrol in the learning activity
Title of the micro-credential	Supervision and identity verification during assessment (unsupervised with no identity verification, supervised with no identity verification, supervised online or onsite with identity verification)
Country/Region of the issuer	Grade achieved
Awarding body	Integration/stackability options (standalone, independent micro-credentials/integrated, stackable towards another credential)
Date of issuing	Further information
Learning outcomes	
Notional workload needed to achieve the learning outcomes (in ECTS credits, 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	

Source: (European Commission, 2021, 2)<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> European Commission. (2021, December). A European Approach to Micro-credentials. European Education Area, 2. <https://education.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2022-01/micro-credentials%20brochure%20updated.pdf>

### 3.5. Key principles to design, issue and recognize micro-credentials

The 10 principles presented below specify the nature of micro-credentials. The principles 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	<p>Micro-credentials are subject to internal and external quality assurance by the system producing them (e.g. the education, training or labour market context in which the micro-credential is developed and delivered). Quality assurance processes must be fit-for-purpose, clearly documented and accessible and meet the needs and expectations of learners and stakeholders.</p> <p>Providers: External quality assurance is based primarily on the assessment of providers (rather than individual courses) and the effectiveness of their internal quality assurance procedures.</p> <p>Providers should make sure that internal quality assurance covers all the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the overall quality of the micro-credential itself, based on the standards referred to below;</li> <li>• the quality of the course, where applicable, leading to the micro-credential;</li> <li>• learners' feedback on the learning experience leading to the micro-credential and;</li> <li>• peers feedback, including other providers and stakeholders, on the learning experience leading to the micro-credential.</li> </ul> <p>Standards: External quality assurance is to be conducted in line with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the European Qualifications Framework Recommendation, where applicable;</li> <li>• the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, where applicable;</li> <li>• the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (the EQAVET Framework) in the field of vocational education and training, where applicable;</li> <li>• other quality assurance instruments, including registries and labels, to build public trust in micro-credentials, where applicable.</li> </ul>
2	Transparency	<p>Micro-credentials are measurable, comparable and understandable, with clear information on learning outcomes, workload, content, level, and the learning offer, as relevant.</p> <p><b>Workload</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher education institutions should use the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and comply with the principles in Annex V to the EQF Recommendation, where possible, to demonstrate the notional workload needed to achieve the learning outcomes of the micro-credential.</li> <li>• Providers that do not use the ECTS may use other systems or types of information that can effectively describe learning outcomes and workload, in compliance with the principles in Annex V to the EQF Recommendation.</li> </ul> <p><b>Qualifications framework/systems</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Micro-credentials may be included in national qualifications frameworks/ systems, where relevant, and in line with national priorities and decisions. National qualifications frameworks/ systems are referenced to the European qualifications framework and, for higher education qualifications, self-certified to the qualifications framework of the European Higher Education Area, which can further support the transparency of, and trust in, micro-credentials.</li> </ul>

2	Transparency	<p><b>Information on the offer of micro-credentials</b></p> <p>Systems for micro-credentials should provide transparent and clear information, to underpin guidance systems for learners, in line with national practices and stakeholders needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information on providers of micro-credentials is published where possible in existing relevant registers. Higher-education providers (and other relevant providers) should be included, where possible, in the Database of External Quality Assurance Results (DEQAR), based on quality assurance in line with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG);</li> <li>• Information on learning opportunities leading to micro-credentials should be accessible and easily exchanged through relevant platforms, including Europass.</li> </ul>
3	Relevance	<p>Micro-credentials should be designed and issued as distinct, targeted learning achievements and learning opportunities leading to them are to be updated as necessary, to meet identified learning needs.</p> <p>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.</p>
4	Valid Assessment	<p>Micro-credential learning outcomes are assessed against transparent criteria.</p>
5	Learning Pathways	<p>Micro-credentials are designed and issued to support flexible learning pathways, including the possibility to validate, recognise and 'stack' micro-credentials from across different systems.</p> <p><b>Stackability</b></p> <p>Micro-credentials are designed to be modular so that other micro-credentials may be added to create larger credentials. Decisions to 'stack' or combine credentials lie with the receiving organisation (e.g. education and training institutions, employers, etc.), in line with their practices, and should support the goals and needs of the learner. Stacking does not create an automatic entitlement to a qualification or a degree. Such decisions are made by regional and national authorities or institutions in line with their awarding processes.</p> <p><b>Validation of non-formal and informal learning</b></p> <p>Obtaining micro-credentials is possible following assessment of learning outcomes, obtained either through a specific course leading to a micro-credential, or on the basis of assessment of learning outcomes resulting from non-formal and informal learning.</p>
6	Recognition	<p>Micro-credentials have a clear signalling value of learning outcomes for smaller modules of learning. Recognition paves the way for a wider offer of such learning experiences in a comparable way across the EU.</p> <p>Micro-credentials are recognised, where possible, by the competent authorities, for academic, training or employment purposes, based on the information provided according to the European standard elements and the principles for the design and issuance of micro-credentials.</p> <p>When micro-credentials are issued by formal education providers, they are recognised, where possible, based on standard recognition procedures used in recognising foreign qualifications and learning periods abroad. This is without prejudice to the right of the competent authorities to define recognition procedures or to verify the authenticity of documents.</p>

<b>7</b>	<b>Portable</b>	Micro-credentials are owned by the credential-holder (the learner) and may be stored and shared easily by the credential-holder, including through secure digital wallets (e.g. Europass), in line with the General Data Protection Regulation. The infrastructure for storing data is based on open standards and data models. This ensures interoperability and seamless exchange of data, and allows for smooth checks of data authenticity.
<b>8</b>	<b>Learner-centered</b>	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.
<b>9</b>	<b>Authentic</b>	Micro-credentials contain sufficient information to check the identity of the credential-holder (learner), the legal identity of the issuer, the date and place of issuance of the micro-credential.
<b>10</b>	<b>Information and guidance</b>	Information and advice on micro-credentials should be incorporated in lifelong learning guidance services and should reach the broadest possible learner groups, in an inclusive way, supporting education, training and career choices.

Source: (European Commission, 2021, 2)<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> European Commission. (2021, December). A European Approach to Micro-credentials. European Education Area, 2. <https://education.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2022-01/micro-credentials%20brochure%20updated.pdf>



# CASE STUDIES AND BEST PRACTICES

## 4. Case Studies and Best Practices

### 4.1. Beyond CCIs

#### Edubadges

Section	Description
<b>Title</b>	Edubadges: issuing digital certificates to learners in the Netherlands
<b>Introduction</b>	Edubadges is a platform by SURF for issuing digital certificates in Dutch education.
<b>Context</b>	Launched in 2020 for secondary and higher education, addressing the need for reliable digital certification.
<b>Objectives</b>	Provide secure digital certificates (edubadges). Support lifelong learning and modular achievements.
<b>Methodology</b>	Utilized by 38 educational institutions. Integrated with LinkedIn for sharing.
<b>Result &amp; Impact</b>	8,500 learners received edubadges; over 13,000 issued. Served as the national digital certification hub.
<b>Best Practices and Learnings</b>	Integrated with Student Information Systems (SIS). Aligned with quality frameworks.
<b>Future Directions</b>	Ongoing platform improvements. Align with emerging standards.

DigiSmartTech

Section	Description
<b>Title</b>	DigiSmartTech: Innovating Textile Education through Digital Technologies
<b>Introduction</b>	Enhancing textile education in Estonia through digital technologies, aligning with EU sustainability goals.
<b>Context</b>	Addressing resource gaps in Estonian HEIs for innovation in smart-functional textiles.
<b>Objectives</b>	Integrate digital technologies into textile education. Promote sustainable textile production.
<b>Methodology</b>	Partners include universities and companies from Sweden, Netherlands, Estonia. Developing an Education Concept Model with three learning modules.
<b>Result &amp; Impact</b>	Held a Multiplier Event with experts discussing sustainable digital technologies. Showcased innovations in smart-functional textiles.
<b>Best Practices and Learnings</b>	Fostered collaboration across educational and industry sectors. Addressed challenges in sustainability and technology integration.
<b>Future Direction</b>	Continue developing digital textile technologies. Enhance educational frameworks for smart textiles.

**4.2. Within CCIs**Gamebadges

Section	Description
<b>Title</b>	Gamebadges: Skill Mapping and Micro-credentials for the Game Industry
<b>Introduction</b>	An innovative initiative to create a European-wide competence-based open badge ecosystem for the game industry and education.
<b>Context</b>	Launched in February 2024, addressing the need for skill recognition and alignment between educational outcomes and industry requirements in the game sector.
<b>Objectives</b>	Enhance skill recognition across Europe. Foster a cohesive and standardized credentialing approach within the game industry.
<b>Methodology</b>	Co-funded by the European Union. Developing a transparent and publicly accessible framework within the game industry.



<b>Results and Impact</b>	Aimed at advancing skill mapping and micro-credentials in the evolving game industry. Provides a strong foundation for industry and educational alignment.
<b>Best Practices and Learnings</b>	Collaborative efforts to address specific industry needs. Emphasized transparency and accessibility in skill recognition.
<b>Future Direction</b>	Continue refining the badge ecosystem for broader adoption. Align further with industry and educational standards.

### CLOCK Your Skills

Section	Description
<b>Title</b>	TULIP Peer2Peer Learning Ltd. and CLOCK Programs
<b>Introduction</b>	Enhancing professional development and skill recognition through innovative micro-credentialing. Founded by Denise Stanley-Chard and Manoj Ambasna.
<b>Context</b>	Established in March 2016 with a focus on cultural learning, social inclusion, and non-formal education.
<b>Objectives</b>	Make invisible skills visible and valued. Empower individuals with accredited qualifications to enhance employability.
<b>Methodology</b>	Offers tailored learning pathways integrating creative insights and business skills. Uses micro-credentials to recognize specific skills and competencies.
<b>Result &amp; Impact</b>	Provides accredited learning opportunities for underserved individuals. Fosters a culture of recognition and collaborative learning.
<b>Best Practices and Learnings</b>	Emphasizes social inclusion and accessibility in education. Utilizes Open Badge Passport for managing and displaying digital badges.
<b>Future Direction</b>	Expand innovative learning solutions and micro-credential offerings. Commit to building a diverse workforce valuing all skills.

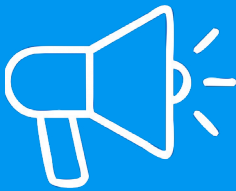
## Creative Futures Academy

Section	Description
<b>Title</b>	Creative Futures Academy
<b>Introduction</b>	Leveraging micro-credentials in Ireland's Creative and Cultural Industries (CCI) to address rapid technological and market changes.
<b>Context</b>	Funded by the Human Capital Initiative in October 2020 with over €10 million to innovate skills development in CCIs.
<b>Objectives</b>	Respond to future skills needs in CCIs. Build essential competencies and drive educational innovation. Embed transversal skills in learning.
<b>Methodology</b>	Multi-platform courses at NCAD, UCD, and IADT with industry collaboration. Flexible, hybrid, and accredited courses for creative professionals.
<b>Result &amp; Impact</b>	Consulted with 260+ industry members. Developed 2 new evaluation frameworks. Delivered 35+ certificate programs to 1100+ learners in 18 months.
<b>Best Practices and Learnings</b>	Focused on flexible and stackable learning experiences. Created diverse program architecture for adaptable learning and career pathways.
<b>Future Direction</b>	Continue developing stackable modules and exit awards. Expand micro-credential offerings and collaborative strategies with industry stakeholders.



# 5 TOOLKIT

## 5. Toolkit



### **Step 1 - Awareness : Understanding the status of Qualification Frameworks for Micro-credentials for LEP**

#### **Objective**

Determine if the application of micro-credentials within the Local Ecosystem Partnership (LEP) is facilitated by existing regional or national qualification frameworks, and to understand the available options if such frameworks are not yet in place. This knowledge is essential for effective stakeholder engagement and for anticipating potential challenges in implementing micro-credentials.

Section	Question
<b>Section 1: How is ACCREDITATION for learning governed in your country?</b>	
<p><b>Purposes:</b> The purpose of this section is to collect specific information about the governance and management of accreditation for different types of learning pathways. The aim is to clearly describe the distinct systems for Higher Education and Vocational Education, as well as the mechanisms for recognising informal and non-formal learning. Key aspects to consider:</p> <p><b>1. Primary Governance Level:</b> The information sought describes whether accreditation is managed primarily at a national level by a country-wide body, or at a regional level by bodies specific to states, provinces, or regions within the country.</p> <p><b>2. Governing Bodies:</b> The response should identify the specific organizations or entities responsible for accreditation. For Higher Education, this predominantly involves national quality assurance agencies that may adhere to European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). Within Vocational Education and Training (VET), management can involve government bodies, sector-specific organizations, or independent agencies, with professional bodies potentially playing a role in some sectors.</p> <p><b>3. Recognition of Informal/Non-formal/Work-based Learning:</b> An explanation is needed regarding how learning acquired outside formal education (e.g., through daily life, work, or structured non-formal settings) is officially recognized or validated. This often involves national Validation of Prior Learning (VPL) or Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) systems that assess and certify learning outcomes from informal, non-formal, and work-based learning.</p>	<p><b>Question 1:</b> How is the accreditation of qualifications currently managed or governed in your country?</p> <p>A. National B. Regional C. Other</p> <p><b>Question 2:</b> Please describe the specific organizations or entities and processes involved in the accreditation of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) programmes and institutions.</p> <p><b>Question 3:</b> Please describe the specific organizations or entities and processes involved in the accreditation of Vocational Education and Training (VET) programmes.</p> <p><b>Question 4:</b> Please describe how learning acquired outside of a formal classroom (e.g., through work or personal experience) is officially recognized or validated in your country.</p>
<b>Section 2: Government Policies and Strategic Initiatives</b>	
<p><b>Purpose:</b> The purpose of this part is to identify governmental actions, policies, and strategies that support the integration and adoption of micro-credentials. We also aim to understand how these initiatives align with broader European efforts and which sectors they address at both national and regional levels.</p>	

Key aspects to consider:

**1. Government-led Programmes/Legislation:**

Government-led programmes, legislative frameworks, or national strategies that explicitly support or integrate micro-credentials.

**2. Alignment with EU Initiatives:** Check if these national policies align with broader European efforts, such as the European Skills Agenda or the Creative Pact for Skills.

**3. Concrete Examples:** Specific, concrete examples of such initiatives are expected, indicating if they are cross-sectoral.

**Question 1:** Are there any national/regional policies supporting adoption of micro-credentials?

- A. Yes
- B. No

**Question 2:** If yes, please describe.

**Question 3:** If yes, do these policies align with broader European efforts, such as the European Skills Agenda or the Creative Pact for Skills?

- A. Yes
- B. No

### Section 3: Qualification Framework Status

**Purposes:** This section requires a direct response regarding the existence of a formal qualification framework for micro credentials.

**Key aspects to consider:**

**Definition of Framework:** A qualifications framework is a formalized structure in which learning level descriptors and qualifications are used in order to understand learning outcomes. This allows for the ability to develop, assess and improve quality education in a number of contexts. Qualifications frameworks are typically found at the national, regional, and international level.

**Question 1:** Is there an existing national or regional qualification framework in your country that officially integrates or recognizes micro-credentials?

- A. Yes
- B. No

**Question 2:** If yes, please give details, including the year it was established.

### Section 4: Practical Activities and Experimentation

**Purpose:** This section calls for descriptions of practical micro-credential initiatives.

**Key aspects to consider:**

**1. Concrete Initiatives:** The answer should describe concrete examples of current or recent initiatives, projects, or pilot programmes involving micro-credentials within the country.

**2. Organizations and Purpose:** Identification of the institutions or organizations involved and the main objective or focus of these activities (e.g., addressing skills gaps, professional development, innovation) is expected.

**3. Specific Examples (Cross-sectoral and CCI-specific):** Provide specific examples, which can be cross-sectoral or specific to the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) sector.

**Question 1: Are there any national initiatives** supporting micro-credentials?

- A. Yes
- B. No

**Question 2: Which sectors are they addressing?**

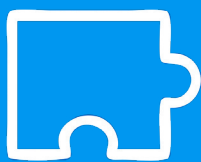
- A. All sectors
- B. Aerospace & Defence
- C. Agri-food
- D. Construction
- E. Creative & Cultural industries
- F. Digital
- G. Energy Intensive Industries
- H. Health and care
- I. Electronics
- J. Mobility - Transport - Automotive
- K. Proximity & Social Economy
- L. Renewable Energy
- M. Retail
- N. Textiles
- O. Tourism
- P. Other

	<p><b>Question 3: Please provide one significant initiative as an example.</b></p> <p>To get a clear picture of each initiative, please use the following template for every example you provide.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Title of Initiative</li> <li>2. Sector(s): Check the list of sectors above</li> <li>3. Type of Learning Higher Education (HEI) Vocational Education and Training (VET) Informal / Non-formal / Work-based Learning</li> <li>4. Purpose</li> <li>5. Participating Institutions/Organisations</li> </ol> <p><b>Question 4: Are there any regional initiatives supporting micro-credentials?</b></p> <p>A. Yes B. No</p> <p><b>Question 5: Which sectors are they addressing?</b></p> <p>A. All sectors B. Aerospace &amp; Defence C. Agri-food D. Construction E. Creative &amp; Cultural industries F. Digital G. Energy Intensive Industries H. Health and care I. Electronics J. Mobility - Transport - Automotive K. Proximity &amp; Social Economy L. Renewable Energy M. Retail N. Textiles O. Tourism P. Other</p> <p><b>Question 6: Please provide one significant initiative as an example.</b></p> <p>To get a clear picture of each initiative, please use the following template for every example you provide.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Title of Initiative</li> <li>2. Sector(s): Check the list of sectors above</li> <li>3. Type of Learning Higher Education (HEI) Vocational Education and Training (VET) Informal / Non-formal / Work-based Learning</li> <li>4. Purpose</li> <li>5. Participating Institutions/Organisations</li> </ol>
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## Result

Step 1 helps to understand whether micro-credentials are integrated into existing national or regional qualification frameworks. It further details the country's accreditation governance,

including how informal or non-formal learning is recognised, and identifies any supportive government policies or national initiatives. The outcome also includes knowledge of current micro-credential activities and experimentation across various sectors. Crucially, it provides insight into available options or suitable models if direct integration frameworks are not yet in place for the LEP, thereby forming a strategic foundation for future development and stakeholder engagement. For further example, please check Annex 1.



## Step 2 - Getting stakeholders onboard

### Objective

This step focuses on building awareness and understanding of micro-credentials among all stakeholders in your Local Ecosystem Partnership (LEP). The goal is to ensure everyone is “on the same page” regarding what micro-credentials are and their benefits.

### Key Aspects and Actions for Raising Awareness

The [Micro-credentials Working Group](#) section under the Creative Pact for Skills website can be used as the reference for upskilling activities. This resource outlines a three-step process, complete with presentations and links:

#### 1. [Discover Micro-Credentials: Get to Know the Basics!](#)

This foundational step is designed to ensure all stakeholders have a clear understanding of micro-credentials. It covers the core aspects of what micro-credentials are, what their potentials are, or what standard elements as well as key principles for designing, issuing and recognizing micro-credentials are, etc.

For detailed information:

- **Definition and Standard Elements:** Refer to the presentation summarizing the [COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS](#) of 16 June 2022 on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability.
- **10 Key Principles:** Consult the presentation summarizing the [GUIDE TO DESIGN, ISSUE AND RECOGNISE MICRO-CREDENTIALS](#) European Training Foundation (2022).
- **Deeper Understanding and Current Status:** See the [Briefing note](#) - Are microcredentials becoming a big deal? for a “reality check” on their evolution across Europe.
- **Importance, Goals, Challenges and Trustworthiness:** Review the [Briefing note](#) - Micro-credentials: striving to combine credibility and agility. This note explains how these short learning programs help individuals adapt to dynamic job markets while aiming for practical utility.

#### 2. [Explore Our Knowledge Base](#)

The step will explore the [MC Knowledge Base](#) as a crucial resource to deepen understanding of micro-credentials and their context within and even beyond the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs), aiming to ensure all stakeholders can deepen their understanding of micro-credentials with various topics. The knowledge base is structured with the specific tabs for micro-credentials in general, best practices/case studies.

In the tab for “Micro-credentials”, different publications belonging to specific topics are added, with correlated author, publication date and especially topics/keywords. The topics/keywords column can be used as filters to narrow down the displayed list of publications. This allows users to quickly find publications relevant to their specific interests within the broad field of micro-credentials.

And the “Best Practices/Case Studies” tab showcases examples from international, national, and



regional contexts, including cross-sectoral applications and instances specific to the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) sector.

### **3. [Get Inspired: See How Micro-Credentials Boost Creative Industries!](#)**

Building on the foundational understanding of micro-credentials gained in steps 1 and 2, step 3 focuses on their practical application. This stage aims to inspire stakeholders by showcasing real-world examples and best practices of micro-credentials in various contexts, including and beyond the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs). By analyzing these case studies, stakeholders will fully grasp the transformative potential of micro-credentials, observing how they enhance skill recognition, support lifelong learning, and align educational outcomes with industry demands.

#### Examples

- [FilmEU: Advancing Film and Media Arts Education through Micro-Credentials](#)
- [\[Gamebadges\] - Pioneering Competence-Based Badges for the Game Industry](#)
- [TULIP Peer2Peer Learning Ltd. and CLOCK Programs](#)
- [Creative Futures Academy](#)



## Step 3 - Stakeholder Dynamics and Knowledge/Power Mapping

### Objective

To categorize stakeholders within the LEP based on their level of understanding of micro-credentials, as well as their level of influence and support for micro-credentials with the LEP.

### Why is this necessary?

The knowledge mapping and power mapping are crucial steps in understanding the complex dynamics of stakeholders involved in the development and implementation of micro-credentials. By identifying the level of understanding among different stakeholders, the LEP can gain a deeper understanding of where additional internal support or education may be needed to promote the adoption of micro-credentials.

Furthermore, through power mapping, the LEP can assess the level of influence and support among stakeholders, identify key influencers, and develop effective strategies to engage them in promoting the adoption of micro-credentials. This will enable the LEP to build a strong coalition of supporters who can help drive the adoption of micro-credentials.

By combining the knowledge mapping and power mapping, the LEP can gain a comprehensive understanding of the stakeholder landscape and develop effective strategies to promote the adoption of micro-credentials.

### 3.1. Knowledge Mapping

The knowledge mapping involves identifying the level of understanding among different stakeholders. This includes:

- Identifying the role of each stakeholder in the LEP
- Assessing the level of understanding of micro-credentials among stakeholders
- Categorizing stakeholders into three levels of understanding: low, medium, and high

### 3.1.1. Identify the role of each stakeholder in LEP

Stakeholders can be categorized into one of the following groups, represented by specific colors:



### 3.1.2. Identify the level of understanding of micro-credentials of each stakeholder

To determine the level of understanding, stakeholders will be asked the following questions:

**a. Are you familiar with the concept of lifelong learning?**

- Not familiar at all
- Not very familiar
- Somewhat familiar
- Very familiar

**b. How beneficial do you think the option to 'stack' lifelong learning activities into a larger qualification could be for employability?**

- Not beneficial at all
- Not very beneficial
- Somewhat beneficial
- Very beneficial for career growth

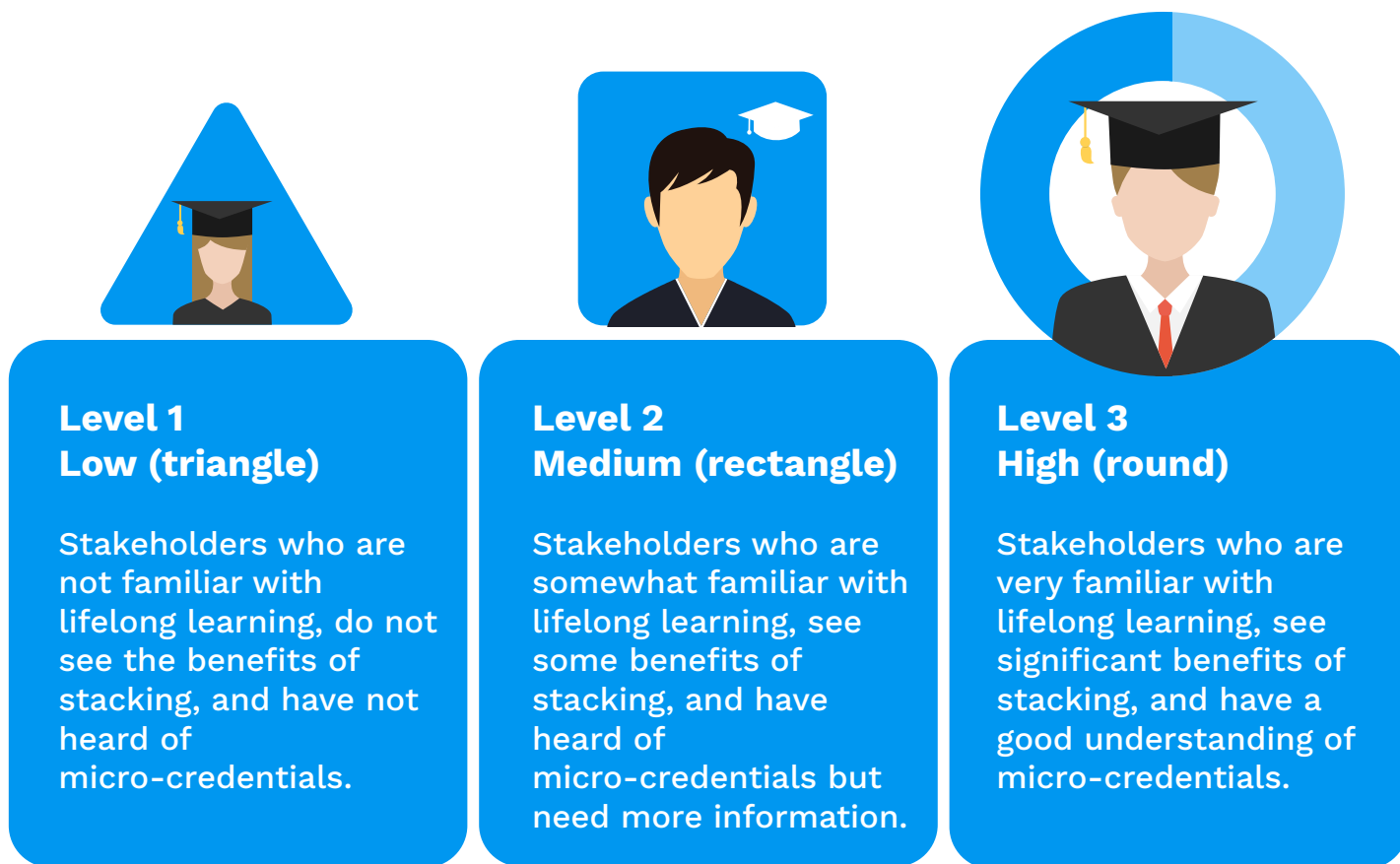
**c. How important is it for lifelong learning opportunities to offer flexible learning options (such as online, part-time, or hybrid formats)?**

- Not important at all
- Slightly important
- Important
- Very important

**d. Have you heard about micro-credentials?**

- No, I haven't heard of them
- I've heard of them but need more information
- Yes, I know what they are

Based on the answers, we can categorize the level of understanding into three levels:



### 3.2. Power Mapping

The power mapping involves identifying the level of influence and support among different stakeholders. This includes:

- Assessing the level of influence of each stakeholder
- Evaluating the level of support for micro-credentials among stakeholders
- Categorizing stakeholders into four scenarios: high influence, low support; high influence, high support; low influence, low support; and low influence, high support

#### The power mapping consists of four scenarios:

Scenario 1: High Influence, Low Support

Scenario 2: High Influence, High Support

Scenario 3: Low Influence, Low Support

Scenario 4: Low Influence, High Support

To determine which scenario each stakeholder belongs to, ask the following questions:

#### Level of Influence:

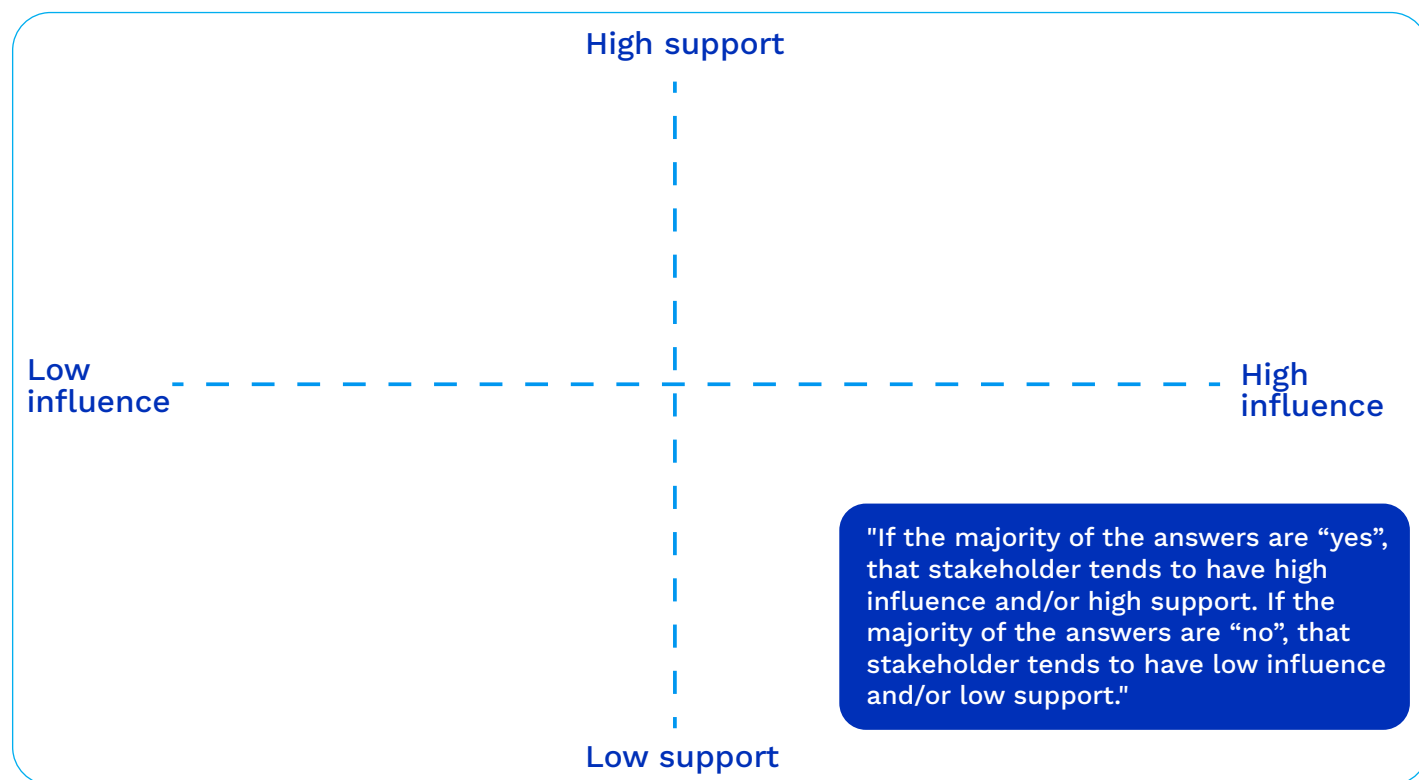
1. Can they allocate resources (financial, human, or technological) to support the development and implementation of micro-credentials?
2. Do they have a formal role in decision-making processes related to education policy and innovation?
3. Do they have access to key information and data that can inform decision-making about micro-credentials?

4. Are they recognized as a thought leader or expert in their field, and do they have the ability to shape opinions and influence decisions related to micro-credentials?

**Level of Support:**

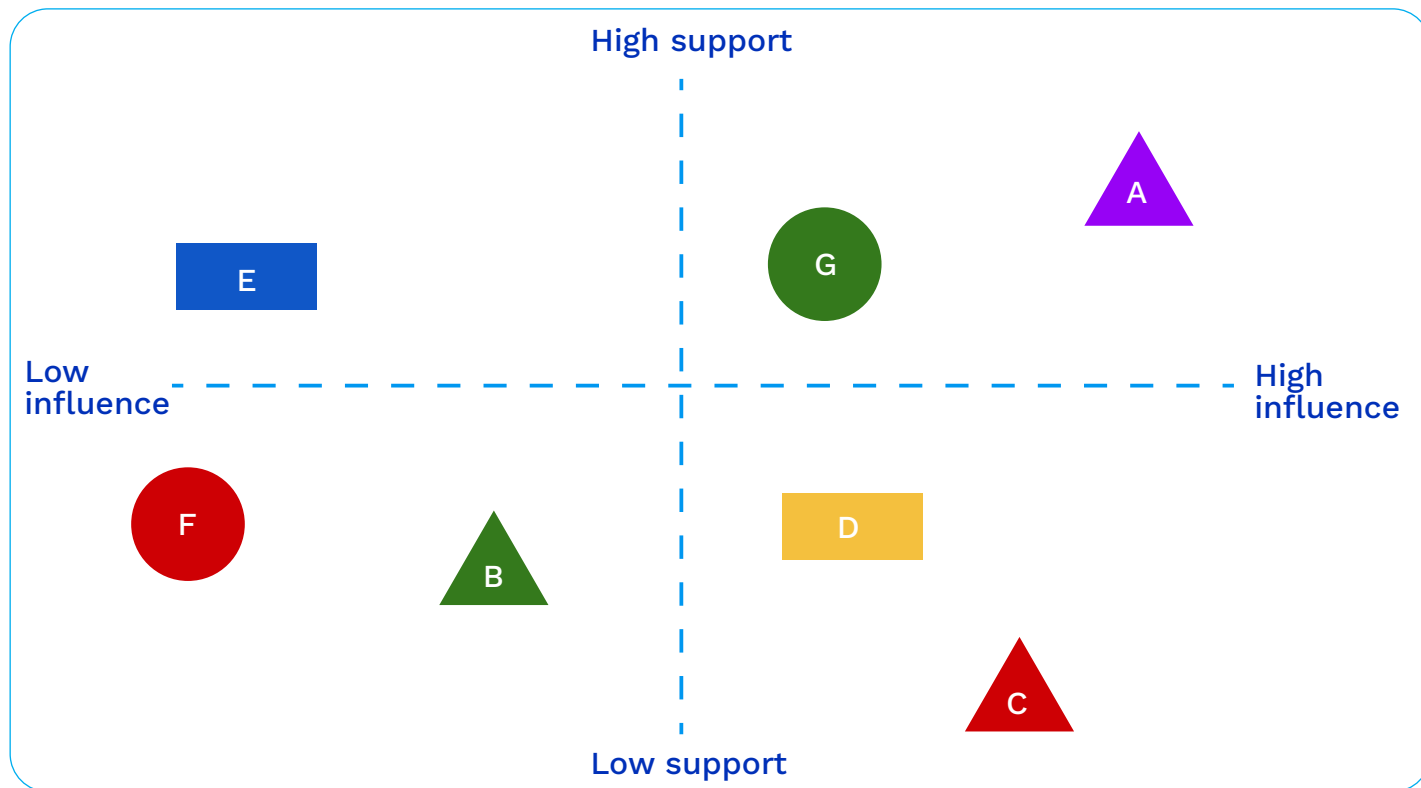
5. Are they willing to provide public endorsement or testimonials to promote micro-credentials?
6. Have they demonstrated a commitment to lifelong learning and skills development in their own organization or community?
7. Are they actively seeking out opportunities to integrate micro-credentials into their existing programs or services?
8. Do they have a track record of supporting innovative approaches to education and training?
9. Are they willing to provide feedback and suggestions to improve the design and delivery of micro-credentials?

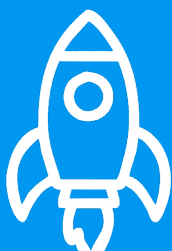
If the majority of the answers are “yes”, that stakeholder tends to have high influence and/or high support. If the majority of the answers are “no”, that stakeholder tends to have low influence and/or low support.



**Result**

The result of this exercise will be a knowledge and power map that presents all stakeholders, categorized by group (purple, green, blue, red, yellow) and level of understanding (triangle, square, round). This visual representation will provide a clear overview of the stakeholder landscape and help the LEP identify areas where additional support or education may be needed.





## Step 4: Collaborative Micro-Credential Design and Implementation—Grounded in Frameworks and Stakeholder Mapping

### Objective

To co-create, develop, and test micro-credential content and delivery methods with relevant stakeholders. This step focuses on designing and providing training content, delivering pilot learning experiences, and collecting evidence and feedback to refine and validate the micro-credentials within real-world settings.

### 4.1. Review and Synthesize Key Insights

From Step 1 – Frameworks and Policies

- Identify how existing frameworks and policies guide the pilot (qualification level, learning outcomes, quality standards).
- Highlight quality-assurance and recognition elements that should inform content design and assessment.

From Step 3 – Stakeholder Mapping

- Confirm which stakeholders are most relevant for content creation, pilot delivery, and learner engagement.
- Identify creative-sector experts and practitioners who can provide applied knowledge and case material.

### 4.2. Assign Roles and Engagement Strategies Based on Mapping and Context

Role	Description	Knowledge / Influence / Support	Main Responsibilities
Core Planning & Coordination Group	Oversees design and pilot process; ensures coherence with frameworks and quality principles.	High / High / High	Lead workshops, validate content and structure, coordinate pilot activities, compile results.
Content Development Team	Experts and trainers responsible for developing learning materials and assessment tools.	High / Medium / High	Create content, design learning activities, and prepare assessment instruments.
Pilot Delivery Partners	Organisations providing the training during the pilot phase.	Medium / High / High	Deliver pilot learning sessions, guide participants, collect feedback.

Quality & Evaluation Advisors	QA specialists ensure methodological soundness and documentation.	High / High / Medium	Monitor pilots, review assessment processes, evaluate outcomes, recommend improvements.
Learners / Pilot Participants	Individuals testing the micro-credential in practice.	Medium / Low / High	Engage in training, complete assessments, and provide structured feedback.
Communication & Documentation Partners	Actors capturing and disseminating results and lessons.	Medium / Medium / High	Produce reports, collect testimonials, and prepare dissemination materials.

### 4.3. Co-Design and Content Development Workshops

Led by: Core Planning & Coordination Group

Supported by: Content Development Team and Quality & Evaluation Advisors

Participants: Trainers, subject-matter experts, representatives of creative-industry organisations, and potential pilot providers.

#### Activities:

- Kick-off Workshop: Present frameworks, stakeholder roles, and objectives.
- **Content Design:**
  - Define learning outcomes and structure (modules, workload, credit value).
  - Develop draft training materials (guides, digital content, case examples).
  - Design assessment tools (projects, portfolios, peer review, practical tasks).
- **Review and Validation:**
  - Conduct peer-review sessions among experts and trainers.
  - Integrate quality feedback and ensure framework alignment.
- **Pilot Preparation:**
  - Select pilot providers, agree on delivery format, duration, and digital tools.
  - Finalize the pilot plan, schedule, and distribution of responsibilities.

### 4.4. Pilot Implementation (Training Delivery and Testing)

Led by: Pilot Delivery Partners

Supported by: Core Planning & Coordination Group and Quality & Evaluation Advisors

Participants: Learners and professionals from the cultural and creative sectors (e.g., freelancers, SMEs, cultural operators).

#### Activities:

- **Pilot Launch:** Inform participants of objectives, structure, and expected learning outcomes.
- **Training Delivery:** Implement learning sessions (online, blended, or face-to-face) using designed content.
- **Assessment:** Apply the developed tools and record learner results.
- **Monitoring and Support:**
  - QA advisors observe and document key aspects of delivery.



- Provide ongoing support and mentoring to participants.
- **Data Collection: Track engagement, satisfaction, and learning outcomes using surveys and observation notes.**

#### 4.5. Feedback, Analysis, and Improvement

Led by: Quality & Evaluation Advisors

Supported by: Core Planning Group, Pilot Delivery Partners, and Content Development Team

Participants: Learners, trainers, and other pilot stakeholders.

##### Activities:

- **Feedback Collection:** Gather insights from all participants via surveys, interviews, and reflection sessions.
- **Data Analysis:** Review outcomes, identify strengths and areas for improvement.
- **Improvement Workshops:**
  - Revise learning content, delivery format, or assessment methods.
  - Confirm continued alignment with frameworks and quality standards.
- **Documentation:** Summarize lessons learned and record decisions for future versions.

#### 4.6. Documentation and Communication

Led by: Communication & Documentation Partners

Supported by: Core Planning Group and Quality & Evaluation Advisors

Participants: All relevant stakeholders interested in future adoption or replication.

##### Activities:

- **Consolidate Documentation:** Collect all design files, pilot data, evaluation reports, and improved content.
- **Prepare Communication Outputs:**
  - Create concise summaries, infographics, or case briefs presenting pilot results.
  - Emphasize effectiveness, innovation, and learner outcomes.
- **Disseminate Findings:**
  - Share through stakeholder meetings, online channels, or sector events.
  - Promote success stories that demonstrate practical impact.
- **Archiving:** Store validated content, templates, and pilot documentation for future reference and replication.



## Step 5: Institutionalization, Accreditation, and Sustainability

### Objective

To consolidate and formalize the outcomes of the pilot phase by embedding validated micro-credentials into institutional structures and sectoral learning pathways, securing official recognition or accreditation where relevant, and ensuring long-term sustainability and impact.

### 5.1. Review and Finalize Evidence

Led by: Core Planning & Coordination Group

Supported by: Quality & Evaluation Advisors and Communication Partners

Participants: Pilot Delivery Partners, Content Developers, selected learners or employers.

#### Activities:

- Compile all pilot documentation, data, and feedback from Step 4.
- Confirm that learning outcomes, assessment standards, and workload align with national or institutional frameworks.
- Validate any adjustments made after the pilot and finalize the content and delivery structure.
- Produce a concise evidence and validation report summarizing quality, impact, and learner results.

### 5.2. Institutionalization and Accreditation

Led by: Core Planning Group and Policy / Accreditation Advisors

Supported by: Quality & Evaluation Advisors and Institutional Representatives

Participants: Accreditation bodies, educational institutions, policy authorities.

#### Activities:

- **Map Recognition Routes:**
  - Identify which accreditation or validation mechanisms apply (institutional boards, sectoral recognition, EQF/NQF referencing).
- **Prepare Accreditation Documentation:**
  - Include learning outcomes, assessment strategy, quality procedures, and pilot evidence.
- **Engage in Consultation:**
  - Meet with institutional or national authorities to align expectations and address feedback.
- **Obtain Formal Endorsement:**
  - Complete official approval processes and record outcomes (approval date, validity, responsible entity).

### 5.3. Integration into Learning Pathways

Led by: Accredited Institutions / Training Providers

Supported by: Core Planning Group and Policy Stakeholders

Participants: Creative-sector networks, employers, learners, and education planners.

**Activities:**

• **Curricular Integration:**

- Embed the micro-credential within existing programs, short courses, or lifelong-learning offers.
- Ensure administrative systems (registration, certification, digital badges) support it.

• **Pathway Alignment:**

- Define how the micro-credential connects to larger qualifications or professional frameworks (stackable or bridge modules).
- Recognition by Employers:
  - Promote its value and usability in recruitment and career development.

### 5.4. Scaling, Partnership, and Sustainability

Led by: Core Planning Group and Institutional Leaders

Supported by: Funding Agencies, Sector Associations, and Communication Partners

Participants: Current and new LEP members, external partners, policy networks.

**Activities:**

• **Develop a Scaling Strategy:**

- Identify additional contexts, regions, or institutions interested in adoption.
- Define adaptation requirements (translation, delivery mode, skill focus).

• **Strengthen Partnerships:**

- Formalize collaboration agreements or memoranda of understanding for co-delivery.
- Explore cross-border or cross-sector cooperation for portability.

• **Secure Resources:**

- Identify funding opportunities and long-term business models.
- Assign ownership for continued delivery, updates, and marketing.

• **Sustain Quality:**

- Establish a lightweight quality-assurance cycle and periodic review schedule.

### 5.5. Communication, Advocacy, and Legacy

Led by: Communication & Documentation Partners

Supported by: Core Planning Group and Institutional Stakeholders

Participants: All partners and networks engaged throughout the process.

**Activities:**

• **Celebrate and Showcase Results:**

- Publish success stories, learner experiences, and institutional case studies.
- Present outcomes in events, conferences, and digital platforms.

• **Policy and Sector Advocacy:**

- Share policy briefs or recommendations highlighting how micro-credentials enhance

creative-sector skills ecosystems.

- **Legacy and Continuous Learning:**

- Archive all materials, templates, and methodologies for open access and reuse.
- Encourage future collaboration to create new micro-credentials based on this model.

**To see the full example of the toolkit with the case study in the Czech Republic, check Annex 2.**

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## Example of Step 1 (Pilot Results)

Understanding the Status of Qualification Frameworks for Micro-credentials within the Local Ecosystem Partnership (LEP)

### Purpose

This annex visualises Step 1 results through a “heat matrix,” showing the relative maturity of national approaches to micro-credentials in Austria, the Netherlands, Italy, and the Czech Republic across four core dimensions:

1. Accreditation & Governance
2. Government Policies
3. Qualification Frameworks
4. Practical Initiatives

Country	Governance & Accreditation	Government Policies / Strategic Initiatives	Qualification Framework Status	Practical Activities & Experimentation	Overall Readiness
<b>Austria</b>	● National system with AQ Austria; strong QA and RPL framework.	● National HE policy (2022) integrating digital credentials; aligns with EU Skills Agenda.	● NQF explicitly includes micro-credentials; pilot integration since 2022.	● Hybrid HE pilots combining ECTS + digital badges.	● Advanced
<b>Netherlands</b>	● National QA via NVAO (Higher Ed) and SBB (VET); RPL embedded in NLQF.	● Comprehensive national and regional policies (LLO Katalysator, Learning Accounts); fully aligned with EU agendas.	● NLQF integrates micro-credentials since 2022; linked to EQF.	● Nationwide pilots through HE consortia and regional ecosystems.	● Advanced

<b>Italy</b>	● Mixed national–regional QA (ANVUR for HE; regions for VET); RPL recognised by law.	● Active policy reforms for digital & lifelong learning; university-led pilots aligned with EU agenda.	● No formal inclusion yet; framework revision under way to add MCs to NQF.	● National and regional pilots testing stackable modules and badges.	● Developing
<b>Czech Republic</b>	● National QA by Ministry of Education and National Institute for Education; RPL formalised.	● No specific policy yet but projects reflect EU principles.	● No official integration yet; preparatory discussions ongoing.	● Pilot project “Towards a Harmonised System of Micro-credentials” (OECD).	● Emerging

**Legend:** ● = Established ● = Developing ● = Not yet integrated

### Interpretation

- Austria and the Netherlands show fully developed systems in all four dimensions: both have national QA structures, explicit policies linked to the EU Skills Agenda, formal framework integration, and active pilot programmes.
- Italy is in transition – strong policy momentum and broad experimentation, but its framework revision is still in progress and governance remains partly regionalised.
- The Czech Republic demonstrates a solid QA base and institutional interest, yet national policy and framework recognition are still emerging.
- Across all countries, recognition of prior learning (RPL) is established, and pilot activity in higher education is driving innovation ahead of regulation.
- The matrix thus highlights a general European trajectory: from policy experimentation toward full integration of micro-credentials into qualification frameworks.

## Applying the Five Steps of the Toolkit

Case Study: Czech Republic – Building Awareness and Coordination for Micro-credentials

### Purpose

This annex illustrates how the five-step process of the Toolkit can look in practice, using the Czech Republic as a work-in-progress example.

The case demonstrates how one country is progressing from awareness and coordination toward policy dialogue—without yet reaching full implementation.

### Step 1 – Understanding the National Context

As reported in Annex 1:

- **Governance:** National quality assurance is managed by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and the National Institute for Education. Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is formalised and operational.
- **Policies:** No dedicated national policy on micro-credentials yet, though several projects and strategies mirror EU Skills Agenda principles.
- **Framework:** No official integration of micro-credentials into the national qualifications framework, but preparatory discussions and mapping are ongoing.
- **Practical activity:** Project for the universities, lead by Charles university: “Improving access to higher education through microcredentials” as a part of the ‘The National Recovery Plan’ of the Czech Republic - Specific Goal C1.

### Analysis:

Step 1 provided a clear baseline—strong QA but fragmented policy and limited scope (mainly HE). These findings highlighted an urgent need for awareness-raising and stakeholder coordination to build a shared understanding before any policy or framework reform could occur.



## Step 2 – Raising Awareness and Engaging Stakeholders

Building on Step 1 results, the team organised an awareness meeting (≈ 30 participants from universities, associations, companies, and cultural bodies) to clarify the micro-credential concept.

It was important to focus on the benefits of micro-credentials from several perspectives — including the labour market, education and training providers, and professionals. The activities highlighted best practices from different countries, showcased examples of implementation, and presented a range of strategic approaches. Particular attention was given to identifying industry needs, presenting relevant labour-market data, and incorporating feedback from the sector to build awareness and understanding. Furthermore, relevant stakeholders were involved in the discussion — particularly those interested in and open to advancing the topic. They were provided with information and support to build their confidence and encourage engagement with the relevant ministries, helping to move the initiative forward.

This outreach-reinforced during Creative Skills Week 2025—generated visibility across ministries and cultural institutions.

As a direct outcome, micro-credentials were referenced in the new State Cultural Policy, signalling early political recognition.

**Transition logic:** Because Step 1 exposed low awareness and no policy anchor, Step 2 focused on shared vocabulary and political visibility as prerequisites for cooperation.

## Step 3 – Mapping Stakeholders Support, Influence and Knowledge

With awareness growing, Step 3 sought to understand roles and leverage points:

- Charles University acted as lead pilot and quality guarantor for the pilot project of public universities.
- The Ministry of Education remained the main policy gatekeeper.
- Other ministries (Culture, Trade, Employment) offered thematic entry points.
- Professional associations voiced sectoral needs.
- Private providers sought legitimacy through partnerships with HEIs.

**Transition logic:** The mixed responses during Step 2 showed interest but confusion over authority. Step 3 therefore clarified who could decide what—laying the groundwork for targeted coordination and the next phase of joint design.

## Step 4 – Co-design and Implementation in Practice

Using the stakeholder map, actors moved from discussion to testing:

- Universities are slowly expanding short, company-specific modules to explore demand.
- Some associations/ service organisations are trying to set up a cooperation with the HEIs providing microcredential courses (in progress).
- Inter-ministerial exchanges underway to set-up long term inter ministerial exchange/working groups on the topic.
- The Czech team contributed to OECD technical consultations on credit value and recognition models.

**Transition logic:** The mapping clarified partners' capacities, so Step 4 concentrated on pilot actions that could demonstrate feasibility while informing national coordination.

## Step 5 – Reflection, Evaluation, and Planning Next Steps

By late 2025, stakeholders began assessing progress:

- Awareness and collaboration had increased, but implementation remained fragmented.
- Ministries working towards the definition of a common micro-credential template and possible funding mechanisms. Still at the beginning of this process.
- Plans emerged to expand outreach to general public, creative professionals, companies and HR departments once a coherent offer exists.

**Transition logic:** Experience from Step 4 produced concrete lessons and coordination channels. Step 5 therefore represents an early reflection phase, focusing on consolidation and forward planning rather than full evaluation—showing how cyclical learning drives continuous improvement.

Toolkit Step	Key Actions (Czech Republic)	Logical Link from Previous Step	Status
1 – Understand context	QA and RPL mapped; pilot by Charles University; no NQF integration.	—	Completed
2 – Raise awareness	Multi-stakeholder meetings; Creative Skills Week; inclusion in State Cultural Policy.	Responded to Step 1 gap in awareness and policy linkage.	Completed
3 – Map stakeholders	Public universities, ministries, associations, private providers.	Addressed Step 2 insight: interest existed but unclear responsibilities.	Completed
4 – Co-design actions	Expansion of pilots; inter-ministerial and OECD coordination.	Built on Step 3 relationships to test solutions jointly.	Ongoing
5 – Reflect & plan forward	Review of progress; defining provider roles; planning learner outreach.	Draws on Step 4 pilot feedback to refine the next phase.	Emerging



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