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EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR  
THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

# From open badges to a European model for (digital) micro-credentials:

## challenges and opportunities for the lifelong learning system actors

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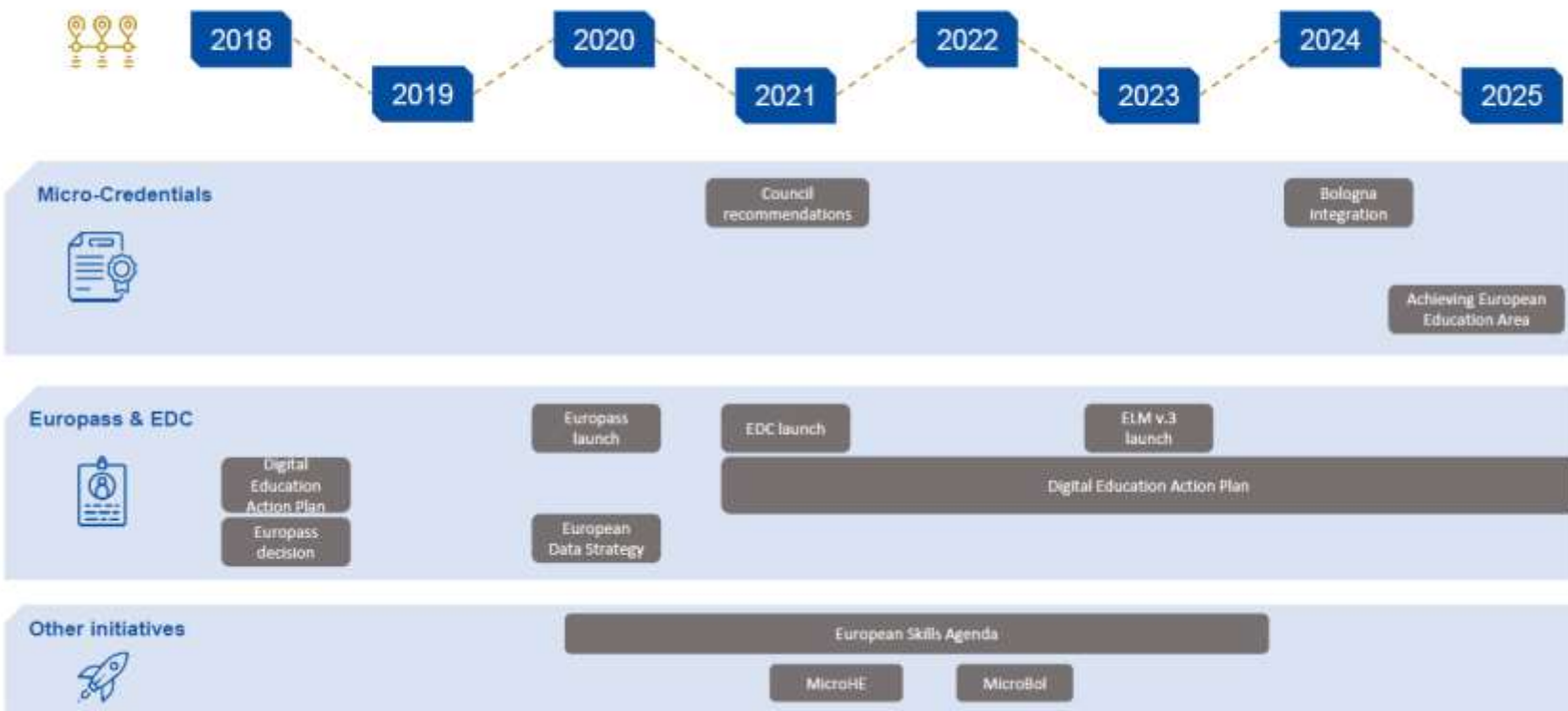
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# Overview of European initiatives

## Policy level



### Key milestones in European education initiatives



# Overview of European initiatives

## Policy level

### Core initiatives at European level and examples of actions



Council Recommendation on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability

- Council Recommendation on Individual Learning Accounts
- Regulation on European Digital Identity Wallet
- Digital Education Action Plan



- Europass decision
- New! Proposal for a Recommendation 'Europe on the Move' - learning mobility for everyone



European Digital Education Hub  
European Learning Model and Digital Credentials



EDI Wallet large scale pilots



ETF – Guide to design, issue and recognize micro-credentials



Grant for projects (Erasmus+)



# Overview of European initiatives

## European approach to micro-credentials



- **Quality** - Micro-credentials are subject to internal and external quality assurance by the system producing them
- **Transparency** - Micro-credentials are measurable, **comparable** and understandable with clear information on learning outcomes, workload, content, level, and the learning offer, as relevant.
- **Relevance** - Micro-credentials should be designed as distinct, targeted learning achievements, and learning opportunities leading to them are updated as necessary, to meet identified learning needs.
- **Valid assessment** - Micro-credential learning outcomes are **assessed against transparent standards**.
- **Learning Pathways** - Micro-credentials are designed to **support flexible learning pathways**, including the possibility to stack, validate, and recognise micro-credentials from across different systems, **including non-formal and informal learning**


Source:

<https://education.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2022-01/micro-credentials%20brochure%20updated.pdf>

# Overview of European initiatives

## European approach to micro-credentials



- **Recognition** - **Recognition** has a clear signalling value of learning outcomes and paves the way for **a wider offer of such small learning experiences** in **a comparable way across the EU**. 
- **Portability** - Micro-credentials are owned by the credential-holder, stored and shared easily, infrastructure for storing data is based on open **standards and data models** (interoperability and data authenticity checks).
- **Learner-centred** - Micro-credentials are designed to meet the learner needs of the target group of **learners, who should be involved in the internal and external quality assurance processes**
- **Authentic** - Micro-credentials contain sufficient information to check their authenticity
- **Information and guidance** - Information and guidance on micro-credentials should be incorporated in lifelong learning guidance services

Source:

<https://education.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2022-01/micro-credentials%20brochure%20updated.pdf>

# Open challenges at policy level



Are Member States adopting the Recommendations and designing policies for the accreditation of micro-credentials within national and regional systems, for all levels of education (formal, non-formal) in line with national standards/system?

What is the state of play of micro-credentials systems in Member States, for all level of education?

Are specific/dedicated funding opportunities available at national/regional level to implement micro-credentials systems and related activities (ILA, guidance, infrastructure etc.)?



# Overview of European initiatives

## Modelling and infrastructure

A European Digital Credential for Learning contains information about



**Metadata**  
(data about the credential)



**Issuer**



**Subject**  
(claims about person)



**e-Seal**

describes claims relates to



**Activities**



**Achievements**



**Entitlements**



**Attestations**



**Learning Outcomes**



**Assessments**

150 hours of coursework  
100 hours of apprenticeship

DE Qualification as a Painter

Entitlement to work as a painter

Recognition of qualification in FI

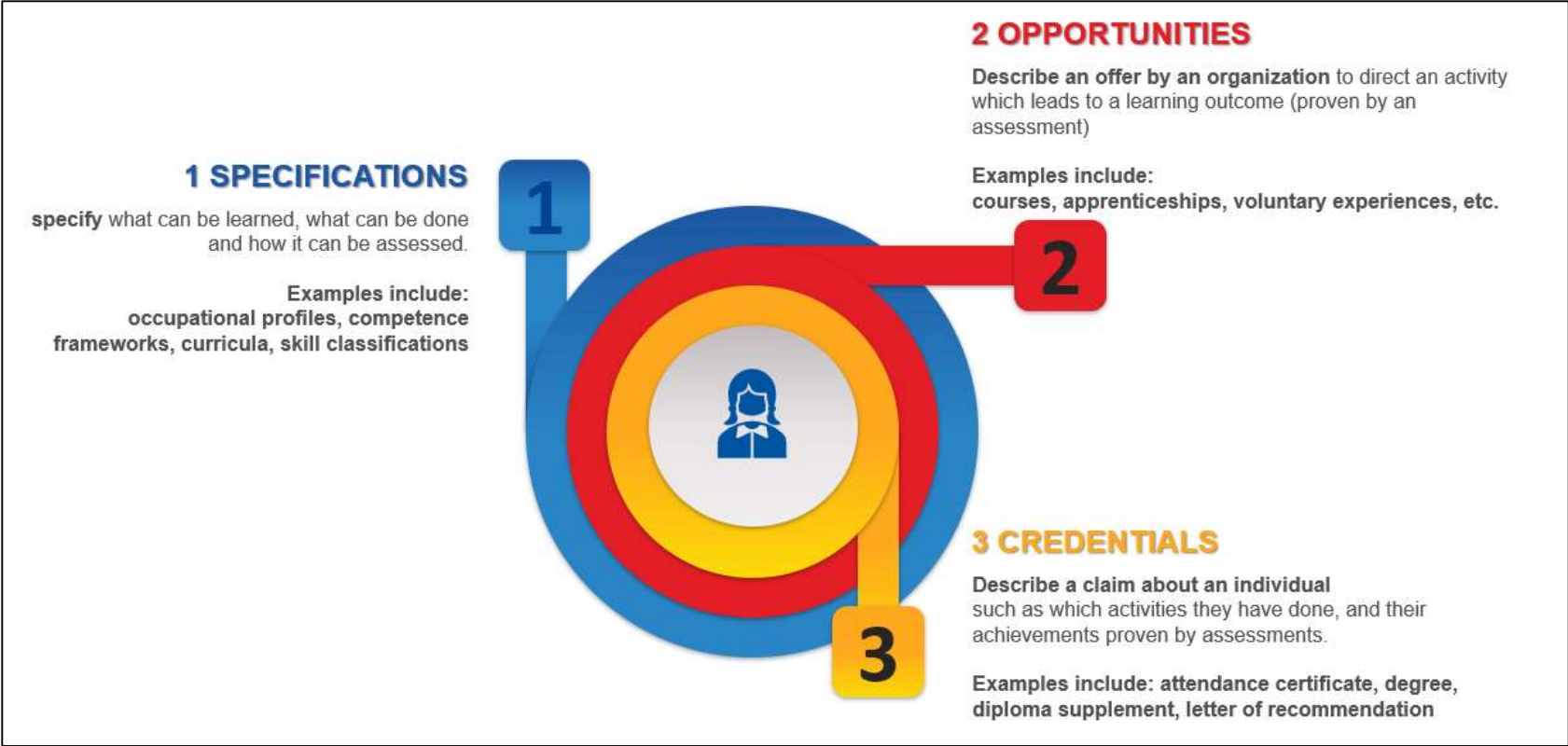
LO of skill of painting

Final Examination Grade B

# Overview of European initiatives

## Modelling and infrastructure

### European Learning Model





# Open challenges at service level



How can we map and adapt to and from existing national, regional and organisational education data models in an efficient manner? Who is responsible for this work and at which level?

Which is the most convenient service/application solution?

- Integrating existing services with the EU ones and at which level, in case (national, organizational etc.)
- Using the EU provided services directly
- Implementing national services
- Other options?



# Overview of European initiatives

## Quality assurance



### 1 Quality

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, be clearly documented, accessible, and meet the needs** of learners and stakeholders.

**External quality assurance** is based primarily on the **assessment of providers** (rather than individual courses) and the effectiveness of their internal quality assurance procedures.

External quality assurance is conducted in line with:

- **Annex IV of the European qualifications framework Recommendation**, where applicable;
- the **Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area**, where applicable;
- the **European quality assurance reference framework (the EQAVET Framework) in the field of vocational education and training**, where applicable;
- **other quality assurance instruments**, including registries and labels, to build public trust in micro-credentials, where applicable.

Providers should make sure that **internal quality assurance** covers all the following elements:

- the **overall quality of the micro-credential itself**, based on the standards referred to below
- the **quality of the course**, where applicable, leading to the micro-credential
- **learners' feedback** on the learning experience leading to the micro-credential; and
- **peers feedback**, including other providers and stakeholders, on the learning experience leading to the micro-credential

Source:

<https://education.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2022-01/micro-credentials%20brochure%20updated.pdf>



# Overview of European initiatives

## Quality assurance

### European reference frameworks and initiatives – a recap

- EQF - 8-level learning outcomes-based framework for all types of qualifications to translate different national qualifications frameworks.
- ESG - Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area, framework for internal and external quality assurance
- ENQA - The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
- EQAR - European Quality Assurance Register has developed a database (DEQAR) of external Quality Assurance Results, which includes programmes and HEIs accredited according to the ESGs
- EQAVET - European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training and the National Quality Assurance Reference Points (NRPs)

# Overview of European initiatives

## Quality assurance



### An example of typology and relations to QA

Table 2: Three clusters of micro-credentials

Skill Credential	Learning Unit	Short Learning Programmes
1-25 hours of learning	25-150 hours of learning	150-1500 hours of learning Typically consists of more than one learning unit
Awarded within the context of non-formal learning	Awarded within the context of formal learning and include options for assessment	Awarded within the context of formal learning and include options for assessment
Not explicitly quality assured by external QA	Often explicitly quality assured by external QA	Always explicitly quality assured by external QA
Linked to the acquisition of a specific competence	Linked to the acquisition of a set of learning outcomes	Linked to specific career progression goals
		Can be mapped to qualification frameworks, either as 'partial qualifications' or as a special category of micro-qualifications



Source: Adapted from Camilleri and Hudak (2018).

# Some use cases in Europe



## AQU Catalunya - Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency

- Micro-credentials for Short learning programmes (SLPs) with Levels 2 and 3 under the Catalan Higher Education Qualifications Framework, and levels 4 and 5 of the National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications.
- Programmes linked to the Catalan Public Employment Service's Catalogue of Training in Specialised Fields.
- Credit load: between 4 and 30 ECTS credits.
- ECTS credits earned are recognisable in official qualifications.
- They are taught by Catalan universities.
- They are in line with labour market needs.
- They are targeted at non-traditional students
- Programmes that receive a favourable assessment are awarded a quality label which is valid for six years

# Some use cases in Europe

## Some example from VET and non-formal sector

- Microcredentials are being offered by VET providers, both on their own but also in partnership with other actors, especially with other formally recognised providers and employers' organisations, mainly in the areas of ICT, manufacturing, engineering, services, health and education (1)
- There are currently numerous initiatives by EQAVET National Reference Points to extend the use of EQAVET to CVET and adult learning, and non-formal and informal learning contexts, possibly including the quality assurance of micro-credentials (2)
- **Ireland** – NQF includes awards of small volume of learning (Major, Professional, Minor, Special Purpose and Supplemental Awards) (2)
- **Estonia** - Launched a regulatory process amending its Adult Education Act to establish the content, provision, quality and duration of learning that leads to the award of micro-credentials (2)
- **Spain** - Organic Law on the Organisation and Integration of Vocational Training, which also defines and regulates micro-credentials (or micro-training) as a part of the formal VET system (2)

### Sources:

- 1) Microcredentials for labour market education and training First look at mapping microcredentials in European labour-market-related education, training and learning: take-up, characteristics and functions (CEDEFOP, 2022)
- 2) EQAVET PLA on 'Quality Assurance and micro-credentials in VET' – Background note, Virtual meeting, 8 -9 November 2022

# Approaches and frameworks beyond Europe



- **New Zealand and Australia** – both have a national micro-credential framework; registries of micro-credentials are in theory open to alternative providers but in practice not really implemented (heaviness of the process, additional rules) > a focus on industry and social partners as alternative providers
- **Ontario** – listing of MCs eligible for a specific type of funding, but not necessarily quality-assured; a specific draft Ontario Micro-Credential Quality Assurance Framework is available, which envisages that providers which are not under the umbrella of a provincially recognised EQAA (External Quality Assurance Agencies) can't independently issue MC.

# Open challenges for QA



How can align EQAP and IQAP across different level of education and countries, to keep MCs comparable and portable?

How can maintain flexibility of the MC development and delivery, considering the core needs of frequent updates, while applying QA guidelines and processes, external and internal?

Which QA standards for the ALE organizations of the non-formal sector, in the absence of established specific EQAP bodies or accreditation?

How is this relevant for MC and ILA implementation?

How can we maintain feasibility also for the providers that are not accredited otherwise within national or regional system, considering the focus of the approach on the “quality of providers”?







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# Discussion and questions



Thanks your attention!



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