



Conference on microcredentials for labour market education and training

25 and 26 November 2021

Virtual event

#Microcredentials4LabourMarket

SPEAKING POINTS JUERGEN SIEBEL, THURSDAY 25 NOVEMBER Conference on microcredentials

Dear participants,

On behalf of Cedefop I welcome you to this **conference on Microcredentials for labour market education and training**.

While the COVID situation has made it impossible for us to meet physically in Thessaloniki, this online format has allowed us to welcome a much higher number of participants than we would have had otherwise. I am happy to observe that **300** policy-makers, stakeholders, experts and researchers from education and training, industry, and beyond have registered for this two-day event. I am also pleased to see that you come from more than 30 countries, **inside** as well as **outside** Europe, demonstrating that the topic of microcredentials and changing qualification landscapes is of global appeal and interest.

A key responsibility of Cedefop, according to our recently revised Founding Regulation, is analysing trends in VET, skills and **qualifications**, spanning both **policies and systems**, and providing a comparative analysis.

The project discussed in this conference – ‘**The role of microcredentials in facilitating learning for employment**’ – which is also part of Cedefop’s **Future of VET** agenda – directly responds to this responsibility. The conference complements the ongoing political discussion on tools and initiatives to support people in their lifelong learning pathways, as put forward in the July **2020 Skills Agenda**, the **Council Recommendation on vocational education and training (VET)** and the **Osnabrück Declaration**.

Microcredentials came about as a result of the digital age and the rise of massive open online courses (MOOCs). The term ‘micro credentials’ has since become more and more widely known. But what are microcredentials and why are they so important? Microcredentials are a way to give visibility and value to shorter learning courses and experiences. They are evidence of practical, flexible, on-demand, and brief learning experiences. Many see them as a way to recognise learning outcomes acquired *outside* education institutions, for example at work, others see them as an *integrated* way to recognise smaller modules or units of *formal* education and training.

Recent developments indicate that microcredentials will have an even more important role in the future. It is expected that economic recovery from the COVID crisis will be accompanied by an increase in short-learning options. We have already observed this trend during the pandemic, with interest in online learning going through the roof across Europe and globally. Providing short learning courses is a response to the need for more flexible, learner-centred education and training. However, it remains to be seen whether this will lead to a permanent shift in learning.

Though you will hear more about our project later today and tomorrow, a few words about the overall objectives for this Cedefop research strand:

- Our first aim is to examine the potential role of microcredentials in **vocational and professional education and training**, in companies and labour market sectors.
- Our second aim is to learn more about the **characteristics** of microcredentials, their **added value** to individual learners, employees and employers, as well as their **impact on existing qualifications and recognition systems**.
- Our final aim is to understand whether we are observing a revolution in the way learning is being valued or whether microcredentials are just a new name for something that existed all along.

The project, now in its second year, has allowed us to involve VET researchers from all over Europe. The research is further supported by an **advisory committee**, composed of representatives of the Commission and the social partners.

Our research is not just theoretical – it contributes directly to policy developments at European and national levels. This research particularly supports the preparations of the forthcoming **Council Recommendation on an EU approach to microcredentials**. A key challenge in the coming years is to develop further our understanding of the links between vocational education and workplace requirements and the role of microcredentials **in supporting lifelong learning, notably flexible as well as relevant up- and reskilling**. How can microcredentials make it possible for individual learners to accumulate learning across sectors, industries, borders, lifespans and across digital platforms?

Research in this area, focusing on transferability of qualifications and credentials is still weakly developed, and it is our hope that we can push the frontier in this area. All it takes for that is for you to engage in today’s and tomorrow’s discussions –let’s rock microcredentials together!

Thank you.

Juergen Siebel
Executive Director