Microcredentials a labour market megatrend

22 and 23 June 2023
Virtual event

PROGRAMME

#microcredentials

DAY 1 — 22 JUNE 2023
(indicated times are CET)

9:00 – 9:30 — **Registration (technical checks)**

9:30 – 9:45 — **Welcome and introduction to the conference**
Chair: **Loukas Zahilas,** *Head of deparment for VET and qualifications, Cedefop*

- Participant welcome
- Context and objectives of the conference
- Housekeeping rules

Opening address
Jürgen Siebel, *Executive Director, Cedefop*

9:45 – 10:30 — Session 1.
Microcredentials and the political context

- **Ana Carrero Yubero,** *Deputy Head of Unit, Vocational Education and Training, Directorate B: Skills and jobs, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission*
- **Juraj Vantuch,** *ReferNet Slovakiaú State Institute of VET, Slovakia*
- **Carlo Frising,** *European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)*
- **Tony Donohoe,** *Business Europe representative, Ireland*

Main topics
- How can the EU, the Member States and social partners support the widening of learning opportunities for individuals and foster inclusiveness and equal opportunities? Are microcredentials in line with this approach?
- What can social dialogue bring to the table when discussing microcredentials? How can such a social dialogue be ensured?

10:30 – 11:30 — Session 2.
Microcredentials for labour market education and training in Europe

Presentation of Cedefop's Microcredentials for labour market education and training project
Anastasia Pouliou and Iraklis Pliakis, *Experts, Department for VET and qualifications, Cedefop*

Research methodology
Greta Kirdulyte, *PPMI, Lithuania*

Q&A

11:30 – 11:40 — **Coffee break**

11:40 – 11:45 — **Guidelines for breakout sessions**
Anastasia Pouliou, *Expert, Department for VET and qualifications, Cedefop*

11:45 – 13:15
(30-minute presentation – 60-minute discussion)

Parallel session 1. How can microcredentials improve skills utilisation and career development?	Parallel session 2. The added value of microcredentials for end users	Parallel session 3. How can microcredentials build stronger links between vocational education and workplace requirements?
Chair: **Iraklis Pliakis,** *Cedefop*	Chair: **Zelda Azzara,** *Cedefop*	Chair: **Anastasia Pouliou,** *Cedefop*
Introduction to the topic • **Stuart Martin,** *Senior Consultant, Skills Consulting Group, New Zealand* • **Dr Reinhard Pittschellis,** *Festo Didactic, Germany* • **Jake Hirsch-Allen,** *North America Workforce Development and Higher Ed System Lead at LinkedIn*	**Introduction to the topic** • **Jørgen Prosper Sørensen,** *Educational Policy Adviser, The Danish Employer Organisation (TEKNIQ DK)* • **Mónica Longo,** *State Public Employment Service (SEPE), Spain* • **Horia Onița,** *Vice-President, The European Students' Union (ESU)*	**Introduction to the topic** • **Sean Gallagher,** *Executive Director, Center for the Future of Higher, Education & Talent Strategy, Northeastern University, Boston* • **Björn Flintberg,** *Project manager, Research Institute of Sweden (RI.SE)*
Rapporteur: **Hanne Shapiro,** *Hanne Shapiro Futures, Denmark*	Rapporteur: **Greta Kirdulyte,** *PPMI*	Rapporteur: **Mantas Pupinis,** *PPMI*
Key topics • What does the labour market require to recognise microcredentials as relevant? • How can the learning culture at work promote a broader uptake and function of microcredentials? • Can microcredentials benefit vulnerable groups, including the unemployed, and how?	**Key topics** • For end users (individual holders as well as education institutions or employers), which conditions must be met to trust microcredentials, and ensure their portability and transferability? • Are there tensions between different end users over the content, form, function and added value of microcredentials (e.g. between learners/ employees and employers)? • The added value for learners/employees vs employers. Is it the same/compatible or an extra source of tension?	**Key topics** • How can validation and recognition of prior learning stimulate more effective skills utilisation? • Which recognition procedures are needed to enable learners to share credentials in their work environment? • How can access to European education systems and standards (such as entrance-level microcredential courses) be widened?

13:15 – 14:00 — Session 4.
Summary of breakout sessions and open discussion
Chair: **Loukas Zahilas,** *Head of deparment for VET and qualifications, Cedefop*

Brief summary of the day
Anastasia Pouliou and **Iraklis Pliakis,** *Experts, Department for VET and qualifications, Cedefop*

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DAY 2 — 23 JUNE 2023
(indicated times are CET)

9:00 – 9:30 **Registration (technical checks)**

9:30 – 9:40 **Welcome**
Chair: **Loukas Zahilas,** *Head of deparment for VET and qualifications, Cedefop*

Introduction to the conference
Anastasia Pouliou, *Expert, Department for VET and qualifications, Cedefop*

9:40 – 10:30 Session 1.
Global perspective of microcredentials

Keynote speakers
- **Mike Feerick,** *CEO & Founder of Alison, Ireland*
- **Wesley Teter,** *Senior Consultant at UNESCO's Multisectoral Regional Office in Bangkok*

Open discussion
Is globalisation of credentials a threat or an opportunity for national VET systems?

Q&A

10:30 – 11:30 Session 2.
A digitally enabled ecosystem of microcredentials
Chair: **Iraklis Pliakis,** *Expert, Department for VET and qualifications, Cedefop*

- **Professor Mark Brown,** *Director, National Institute for Digital Learning, Dublin City University, Ireland*
- **Simone Ravaioli,** *Director Global ecosystem and Innovation, Digitary by Parchment, Italy*
- **Konstantinos Pouliakas,** *Expert, Department for VET and skills, Cedefop*

Q&A

Key topics
- How can education systems adapt to the new reality that digital credentials have created?
- Which emerging technologies (i.e. AI, machine learning) are currently supporting microcredentials, and what is still needed?
- How can interoperability of microcredentials – allowing learners to share microcredentials across different educational, job and/or other platforms – be enabled?

Live polling

11:30 – 12:30 Session 3.
Future research on microcredentials
Chair: **Anastasia Pouliou,** *Expert, Department for VET and qualifications, Cedefop*

- **James Keevy,** *Chief Executive Officer, JET Education Services, South Africa*
- **Paul Grainger,** *UCL Institute of Education, University College London, United Kingdom*
- **John Hart,** *Sequel IEC, United Kingdom*

Q&A

Key topics:
- What has the research on microcredentials achieved so far?
- What is still missing? What type of supporting tools are needed?
- How can we enable a wider supportive environment for the future uptake of microcredentials?

Live polling

12:30 – 12:45 **Coffee break**

12:45 – 13:45 Session 4.
Are microcredentials 'the new black'?
(Moderated panel discussion)
Chair: **Loukas Zahilas,** *Head of deparment for VET and qualifications, Cedefop*

Panelists
- **Borhene Chakroun,** *Director, Division of Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems, UNESCO*
- **Shizuka Kato,** *Higher Education Policy Analyst in the Directorate for Education and Skills, OECD*
- **Manuela Prina,** *European Training Foundation, ETF*
- **Takaaki Kizu,** *Skills Development Officer, Skills and employment branch, Employment Policy Department, ILO*
- **Anastasia Pouliou,** *Expert in qualifications and credentials – Future of VET, Cedefop*

Open discussion
- Could microcredentials become a Trojan horse for qualifications?
- Do microcredentials support or hinder equity in learning?

13:45 – 14:00 **Concluding remarks and end of the conference**

- **Loukas Zahilas** and **Anastasia Pouliou,** *Cedefop*

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INTRODUCTION

The conference provides an opportunity for policy-makers, stakeholders, experts and researchers from education and training, industry, and beyond, to be informed of the emerging role of microcredentials in supporting labour-market-related and employment-relevant education, training and learning.

The event will offer participants insights into the links between microcredentials and evolving qualifications systems, the perceived added value of microcredentials for end users, as well as creating a space for reflection and discussion of microcredentials' broader uptake and function. Building on research carried out by Cedefop in recent years, the conference complements the ongoing political discussion on tools and initiatives supporting people in their lifelong learning pathways as detailed in the July 2020 Skills Agenda, the Council Recommendation on vocational education and training (VET), the 2020 Osnabrück Declaration as well as the European Union Council Recommendation on a European approach to microcredentials.

OBJECTIVE AND AIMS OF THE CONFERENCE

The conference aims to initiate a discussion on the role microcredentials play in supporting labour-market-related and employment-relevant education, training and learning, including vocational education and training. It is an opportunity for Cedefop to share with participants the methodology and final findings of its study on microcredentials, and provides a space for reflection and discussion of future research on microcredentials. It will also be an opportunity for participants to exchange ideas and discuss the next steps of Cedefop's work in the field.

Presentations and discussions during the first day of the conference (22 June) will focus on the project, its final outcomes and the current political context; participants will have an opportunity to contribute actively in three breakout sessions. The second day (23 June) will offer a broader perspective on microcredentials, as they are increasingly being viewed as policy instruments for addressing several challenges (fast-changing labour market demands, digitalisation, ageing populations and needs for reskilling and upskilling, etc).

THURSDAY 22 JUNE

Bridging the abyss: from microcredentials to the labour market – added value for end users

Microcredentials have only recently gained prominence in European policy debates. They are increasingly considered as a new and more flexible way of recognising knowledge, skills and competences. By giving learners and employees the possibility to collect and combine smaller units of learning according to their specific needs, microcredentials have the potential to ease lifelong and life-wide learning. However, the portability and transferability of microcredentials, their currency and exchange value, largely depend on their visibility and perceived value by others, notably by education institutions and employers. Even though there are several examples of potentially large-scale efforts to address emerging skill needs through microcredentials – which could lead to innovations in VET – the provision of microcredentials still remains fragmented and without sufficient embedded user-centred services that could help learners and employers make informed decisions about the learning options available.

During the first day, after a brief introduction, Cedefop will presentation the main research questions and final findings of its study on microcredentials for labour market education and training. The study attempts to offer new knowledge on the characteristics of microcredentials, their added value for individual learners and employees, as well as their impact on existing qualifications systems.

On the first day there will also be three breakout sessions:
- **breakout session 1** will address the role microcredentials play in improving skills utilisation and career development;
- **breakout session 2** will address the added value of microcredentials for end users;
- **breakout session 3** will discuss how microcredentials can build stronger links between vocational education and workplace requirements.

FRIDAY 23 JUNE

Microcredentials untold: the European and international perspective

The second day of the workshop will offer participants an opportunity to discuss different issues related to microcredentials' existing use at European and international levels. Microcredentials are awarded by a diversity of stakeholders operating at different levels and institutional contexts. A discussion focusing on the extent to which digital credentialing in Europe and beyond is advancing, as well as on the global dimension of microcredentials, will be the focus of the day. Discussions will also aim at exploring whether microcredentials can **bridge the world of education and the world of work**. During the second day, leading international experts in 'microcredentialling' will present inspiring ideas on their current work and share their vision of what comes next.

WORKING METHODS

The conference will take place online (Zoom platform). Participants will attend presentations and will be able to participate both through standard Q&A sessions and through chat comments.

Both days will include plenary sessions. For the discussions of 22 June in the break-out sessions, participants will be able to choose a theme of interest for them.