

Regional Education Workshop
“Together we Conceptualize green education transformation”,
4th October 2023, Sarajevo

Concept paper

Micro-credentials as a means to enable green skills development

The need for green skills

Boosting youth and workforce competencies can unlock new opportunities to overcome the migration of skilled young people, can encourage innovation and lead to finding new sources of sustainable and green productivity growth. The challenge is twofold: formal education must ensure that the younger generations are equipped with the right set of skills and competencies to thrive in the future’s labour market, and the flexibility to adapt to a work environment that is changing rapidly. In view of the current need for a green transformation, many of the skills acquired in formal education become obsolete. The need for life-long learning and boosting competencies of working-age adults by creating opportunities for adult learning is thus evident.¹

Shared domestic challenges in the Western Balkans are having an impact on the composition of competencies in the countries. Population aging may indicate, that a growing share of the population may not possess the competencies needed in the labour market and may not be able to contribute to a green growth. Migration remains high amongst people of all educational levels, thus creating skills shortages including in technical skills (engineering, construction, electrical) which are regarded an important asset for green transformation in emerging economies. Climate change is further creating a demand for new competencies that open up new opportunities for the Western Balkans. **Regional economies are in dire need for green transition, paving the way towards sustainable economies in line with the European Green Deal². To engage in a green transition, new capacities and skills will be needed. A successful transition to a low-carbon economy will only be possible by ensuring that workers are able to transfer from areas of decreasing employment to other industries and green jobs.³**

¹ OECD (2021), *Multi-dimensional Review of the Western Balkans: Assessing Opportunities and Constraints*, OECD Development Pathways, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/4d5cbc2a-en> and OECD (2022), *Multi-dimensional Review of the Western Balkans: From Analysis to Action*, OECD Development Pathways, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/8824c5db-en>.

² EC (2020), *Implementing a Green Agenda for the Western Balkans*. Factsheet. November 2020.

³ OECD 2021, p. 76.

Micro Credentials are also mentioned in the **Western Balkans Agenda on Innovation, Research, Education, Culture, Youth and Sport**⁷ as a flexible tool for skills development and has been identified by the EU as an instrument for life-long learning and employability⁸ as they allow for a targeted acquisition of skills and competences adapted to a fast-changing society and labour market. Micro-credentials have also been identified to play a role in the delivery of **the European Green Deal**⁹, aiming to put economy and society on a more sustainable path.

They are important for various stakeholder groups as they can be used to address specific work needs and recognise learning outcomes that are acquired outside formal education.

Definitions

UNESCO proposal on global definition of Micro-credentials (2022)

A Micro-credential:

- *is a record of focused learning achievement, verifying what the learner knows, understands or can do;*
- *includes an assessment based on clearly defined standards and is awarded by a trusted provider;*
- *has stand-alone value and may also contribute to or complement other micro-credentials or macro-credentials, including through recognition of prior learning;*
- *meets the standards required by relevant quality assurance*

UNESCO (2022), Towards a common definition of micro-credentials, p.6

Council of the European Union (2022)

'Micro-credential' means the record of the learning outcomes that a learner has acquired following a small volume of learning. These learning outcomes will have been assessed against transparent and clearly defined criteria. Learning experiences leading to micro-credentials are designed to provide the learner with specific knowledge, skills and competences that respond to societal, personal, cultural or labour market needs. Micro-credentials are owned by the learner, can be shared and are portable. They may be stand-alone or combined into larger credentials. They are underpinned by quality assurance following agreed standards in the relevant sector or area of activity.

Council of the European Union (2022), Council Recommendation on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability, para 5.

⁷ Western Balkans Agenda on Innovation, Research, Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, available at [A Western Balkans agenda on innovation, research, education, culture, youth & sport - Publications Office of the EU \(europa.eu\)](#) p.2.

⁸ Council Recommendation on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability, COM/2021/770 final, available at [EUR-Lex - 52021DC0770 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#).

⁹ COM(2019) 640 final.

Potential of Micro-credentials



Contexts in which micro-credentials are expected to play a role, OECD 2023, p.4. OECD 2023, p. 4

Micro-credentials do have a multitude of potential uses and benefits. The green and digital transition are changing the skills demand and require people to remain up to date and ensure their training is adapted to individual needs. Micro-credentials can aid **reskilling and upskilling** of workers in response to transformations in the labour market. They can increase **employability** and may lead to higher wages and higher-quality employment. Micro-credentials offer more flexible, **learner-centred education** and support individual learning (focused on specific learner needs, accumulate learning in small pieces, stackable towards a qualification) and thus are a tool for both initial education and **life-long learning** (inside and outside the formal education sector) and can thereby contribute to access to and completion of education and training. They furthermore have potential to promote **social inclusion** by facilitating a wide range of learners, including vulnerable and disadvantaged groups to access higher education and VET.

Key References

Council of the European Union (2022), [Council Recommendation on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability](#)
OECD (2023), [Micro-credentials for Lifelong Learning and Employability: Uses and Possibilities](#).
UNESCO (2022), [Towards a common definition of micro-credentials](#)
OECD (2021), [Multi-dimensional Review of the Western Balkans: Assessing Opportunities and Constraints](#)
OECD (2022), [Multi-dimensional Review of the Western Balkans: From Analysis to Action](#)
European Training Foundation (2022), [Micro Credentials are Taking off: How important are they for making lifelong learning a reality?](#)

Useful Links

[MICROBOL - Micro-credentials linked to the Bologna key commitments](#)
[MicroHE – Supporting Learning Excellence through Micro-Credentials in Higher Education](#)
[MicroCredX – Micro Credentials Exchange](#)
[MicroGuide – Developing Guidelines for the Implementation of Micro-credentials in Higher Education](#)
[OeAD International Peer Learning Activity: Micro-credentials – implementing council recommendation and digital credential frameworks](#)