

Shaping Lifelong Learning

The Role of Micro-Credentials in Higher Education and Beyond

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Directorate for Education and Skills

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- I. What are micro-credentials?

 - II. Overview of the OECD's work on micro-credentials

 - III. Micro-credential development in higher education

 - IV. Harmonised approach to micro-credentials



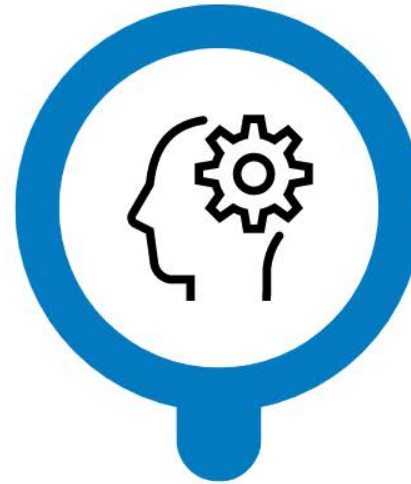
What are micro-credentials?

**Compared to traditional education and training programmes,
micro-credentials are**



Smaller

in volume (in study
duration or load)



More targeted

in terms of skills or
study topics

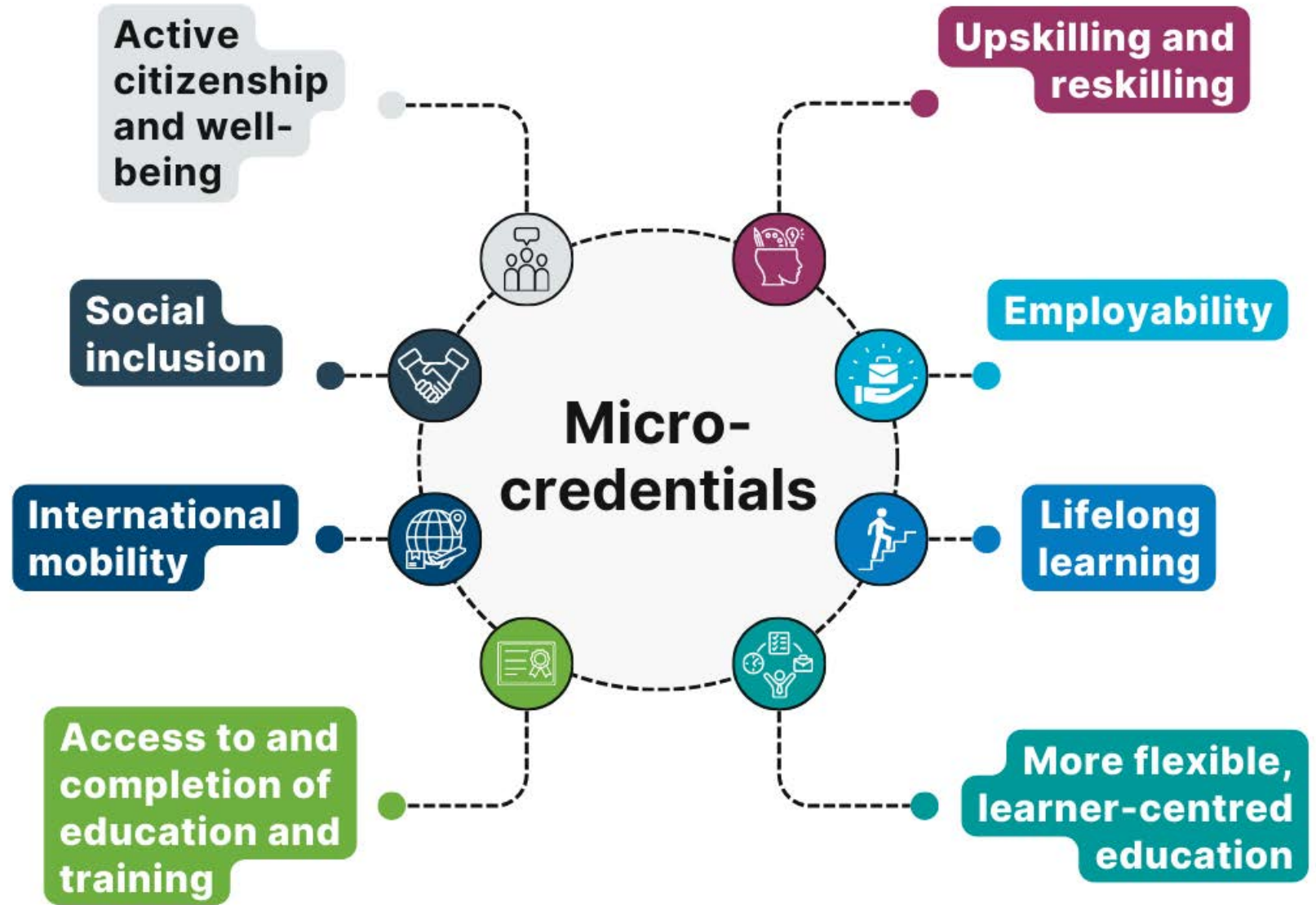


More flexible

in delivery



Why and in which contexts are micro-credentials on the rise?

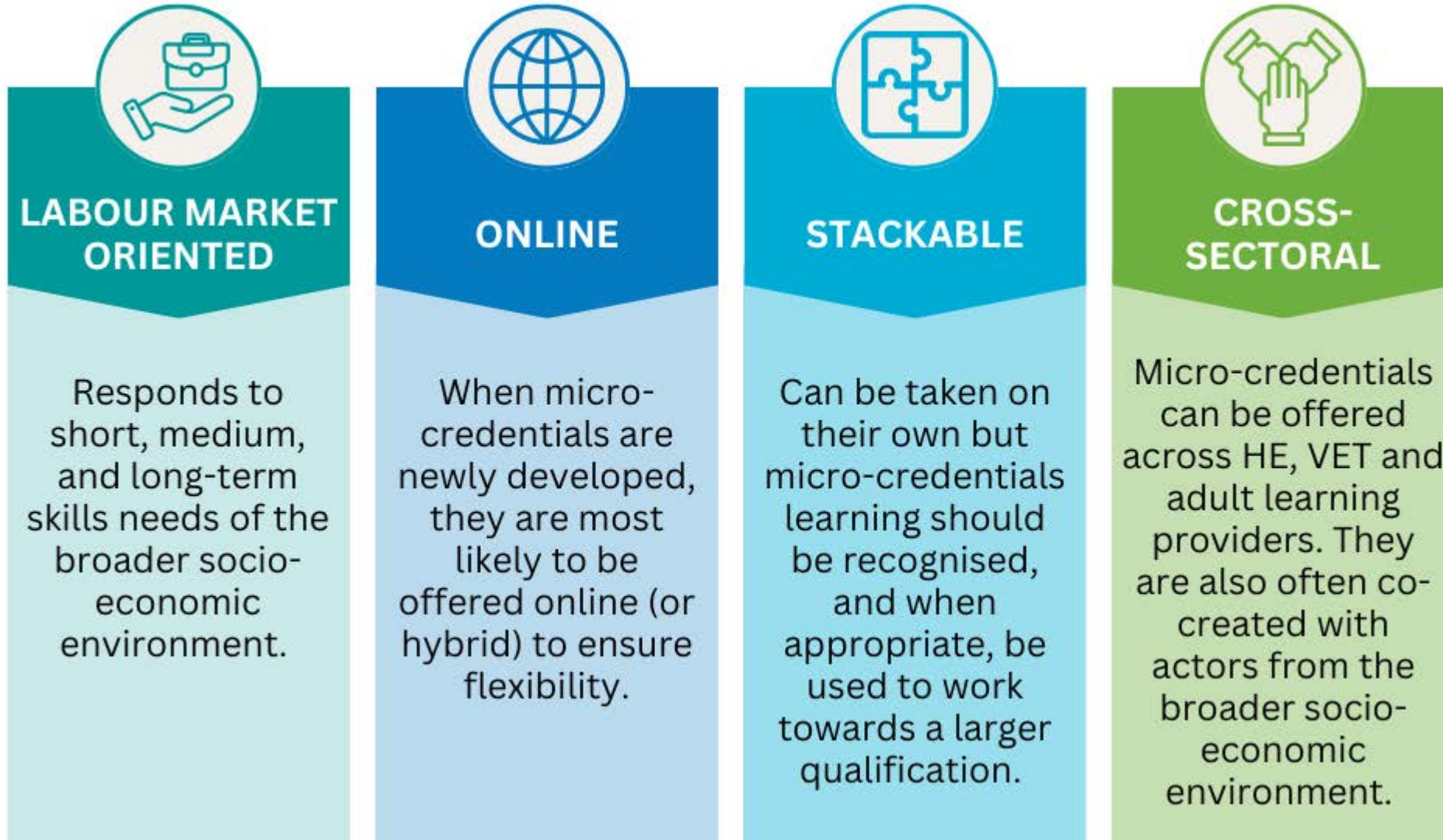


Source: OECD (2023), "Micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability: Uses and possibilities", OECD Education Policy Perspectives, No. 66, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9c4b7b68-en>.



Key features of micro-credentials

How are they distinct from long-established continuing education programmes?





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5

PRICE ⓘ
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<https://microcreds.ie/partners/maynooth-university/offerings/micro-credential-brewing-bvaz-4>



Example: Micro-credentials in VET developed by industry representatives



Number	Title	Level	Credits	Developer	Approval Date	Review Date	
4571	Basic Construction Skills (Micro-credential)	3	39	Waihanga Ara Rau Construction and Infrastructure Workforce Development Council (6046)	03/2022	24/03/2025	⏪
4980	Core Construction of Forestry Roads (Micro-Credential)	3	40	Muka Tangata - People, Food and Fibre Workforce Development Council (6050)	01/2024	30/12/2026	⏪
4849	Extractive Industries Site Construction and Maintenance (Micro-credential)	4	13	Hanga-Aro-Rau Manufacturing, Engineering and Logistics Workforce Development Council (6049)	08/2023	30/12/2024	⏪
4974	Forestry River Crossing Construction (Micro-credential)	3	20	Muka Tangata - People, Food and Fibre Workforce Development Council (6050)	01/2024	30/12/2026	⏪
4842	Steel Fixing/Reinforcement Installation for Construction and Infrastructure (Entry Level) (Micro-Credential)	3	20	Waihanga Ara Rau Construction and Infrastructure Workforce Development Council (6046)	07/2023	30/12/2026	⏪

* Workforce Development Councils act as the voice of industry and are responsible for ensuring the vocational education system meets industry needs.



Example: Micro-credentials in **non-formal** sector developed by a business



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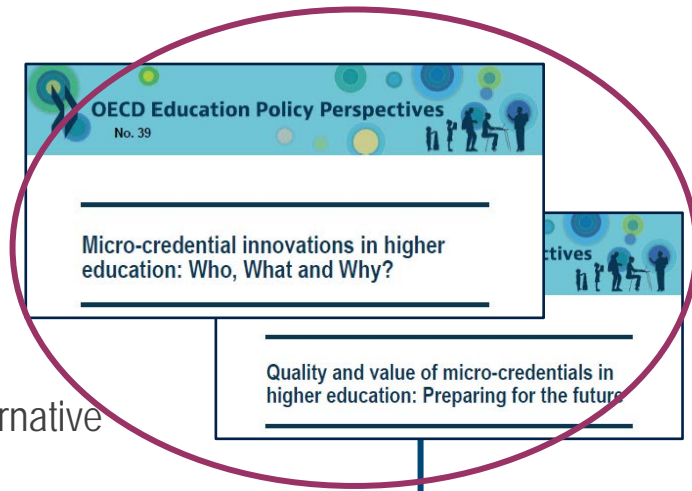
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<https://www.coursera.org/google-career-certificates>

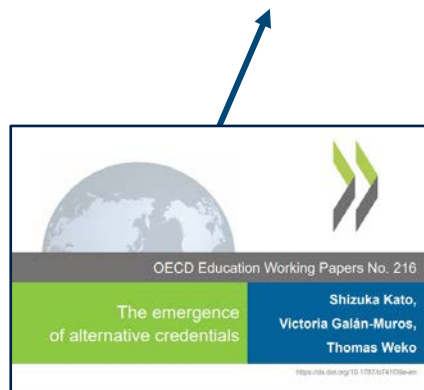


We have been supporting governments as they respond to micro-credential innovations

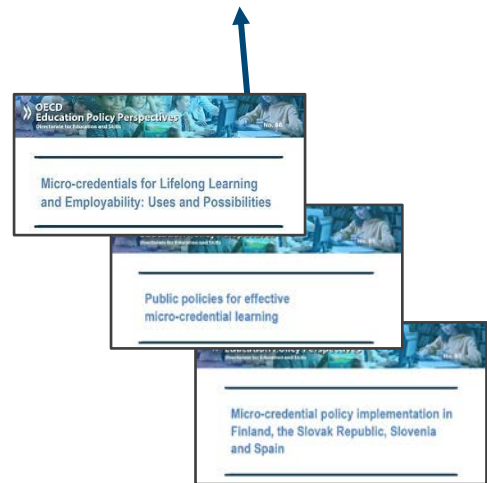
2019 - 20
Initial analysis of alternative credentials



2022 - 23
Support to implement the Council Recommendation



2021
Analysis to inform the European Commission's proposal for a Council Recommendation



2024 -
Work continuing to support the creation of a robust ecosystem and assist in addressing skills shortages





**Micro-credentials
in higher education**



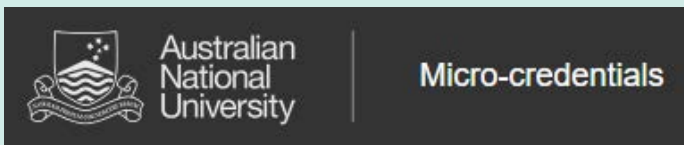
HEIs across OECD countries develop micro-credentials in diverse forms

Independently

- > Micro-credentials developed by individual HEIs or HEI departments
- > Can be based on, among others:
 - Unbundling of degree programmes;
 - Bundling of courses from multiple degree programmes;
 - Pre-existing continuous learning offers.

**HO
GENT**

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In collaboration with others

- > Micro-credentials developed by HEIs partnering with other organisations, including:
 - Employers, professional organisations or other labour market actors;
 - Through online learning platforms;
 - As part of national and international collaboration projects.



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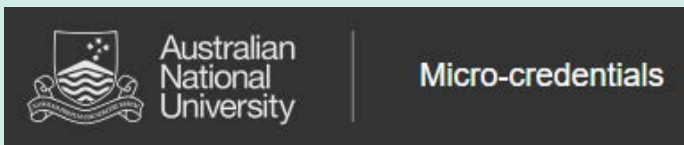
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Microdegrees.

University College Ghent, Belgium
<https://www.hogent.be/opleidingen/micro-degrees/>



visit us on the information day of September 10 →

The micro degree sustainability is part of the bachelor's degree in business management, specialization in environmental and sustainability management. A micro degree is a clustering of courses within a specific domain of a bachelor's degree. You will receive a credit certificate for all course units for which you pass.



MICRODEGREE

Starting last autumn, TalTech's Open University will offer abbreviated study programmes - microdegrees - comprising two or more degree-level courses. A microdegree can be acquired in one to two semesters. Completion of a microdegree programme is confirmed by a continuing education certificate.

Microdegree programmes are prepared based on the labour market requirements and combine courses with an aim to best meet the needs and consider the prospective challenges facing the students. A tuition fee is charged for microdegree courses and calculated for each semester based on the amount of credit points and the established fee rates.

[FRAMEWORK OF THE DIGITAL STATE](#)

[DIGITAL MANUFACTURING](#)

Tallinn University of Technology, Estonia
<https://taltech.ee/avatud-ope/mikrokraadid>



CCE programs, services and course offerings

The Centre for Continuing Education (CCE) hosts non-award professional short courses and micro-credentials on behalf of ANU colleges and institutes. We are also the home of the ANU community courses for those wishing to study [Asian](#) or [European languages](#), develop some [artistic skills](#) or learn about [history, culture or philosophy](#).



Professional Learning

CCE provides the hosting platform for a diverse range of professional learning / executive education short courses. Each of these is developed using the vast knowledge and experience of world-leading academics from ANU colleges, institutes and schools. So if you are looking for some training or up-skilling as part of a professional development



Micro-credentials

CCE also hosts micro-credentials on behalf of ANU. These are similar to professional learning short courses but carry the additional benefit of accreditation. On successful completion of an ANU micro-credential, participants receive a digital badge containing all of the metadata linked to the completed learning and assessment. This metadata may



Community Courses

CCE has delivered short community courses for more than 50 years and this tradition continues today. Offerings span [Asian](#) and [European languages](#), art and [history/culture/ philosophy](#). This diverse program offers something of interest to most and is a great way to continue the journey of lifelong learning.

Australian National University
<https://cce.anu.edu.au/>



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Institut Français de la Mode and Kering, France; FutureLearn, UK



Micro-credential Pilots 2020-21

With the support of the Government of Ontario, eCampusOntario has launched thirty-six micro-credential pilot projects at Ontario colleges and universities. Each pilot project represents a unique partnership with an industry partner and a collaborative response to an identified skills gap. Download this document for a full list of pilots.

Whatever the conditions, eCampusOntario is your partner in driving the evolution of education through micro-credentials at both the local and systemic level. Upgrading learning through micro-credentials offers digital and creative solutions to meet rapid needs while building longer-term economic resilience.

→ Micro-credential in Data Analytics

Create new content to issue micro-credentials in fundamental elements of the data life cycle: business analysis, data exploration, quantitative analysis, communication of results, and data life-cycle management. **Partners:** McMaster University, National Institutes of Health Informatics

→ Micro-credential in Design Thinking

Explore the complex challenges and opportunities at the intersection of design, technology, and social theory, in the development of a new product prototype for this stackable Human Centred Design Micro-credential. **Partners:** OCAD University, Myant Inc.

→ Micro-credential for Media Ingestor

Create new content to issue micro-credentials in ingesting media into production for news broadcast environments. **Partners:** Seneca College, Avid Technology Inc.

eCampusOntario, Canada
<https://micro.ecampusontario.ca/pilots/>



Example: In partnerships with HEIs in other countries



- MicroCreds is a 5-Year €12.3 million national project, led by Irish Universities Association and delivered in partnership with 7 universities
- The MicroCreds Project's format of micro-credentials:
 - Small, focused courses
 - Range from undergraduate to masters Level
 - Credit size 1-30 ECTS (1 ECTS = 25 learning hours)
 - University quality assured
 - Standalone credentials, some may stack towards a larger award
 - Developed in response to identified skills need
- Development of a common platform: [microcreds.ie](https://www.microcreds.ie)

<https://www.iua.ie/overview-microcreds/>





Example: In partnerships with other HEIs in the country



The European Commission supports HEIs cooperating in developing micro-credentials within the framework of the European Universities Initiative

- 64 Alliances;
- 35 countries, including all EU Member States;
- More than 560 HEIs;
- A budget of up to €14.4 million per alliance for four years.



<https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/european-universities-initiative>



Harmonised micro- credential system



- > The project aims to support the development of a **harmonised national approach** to micro-credentials across education and training sectors, i.e. the higher education, vocational education and training (VET) and further education sectors.
- > This project is funded by the European Union through the Technical Support Instrument.





Expected outcome and impact

A positive contribution to **adult participation** in education and training

A positive contribution to the **reduction of labour shortages and skills mismatches**

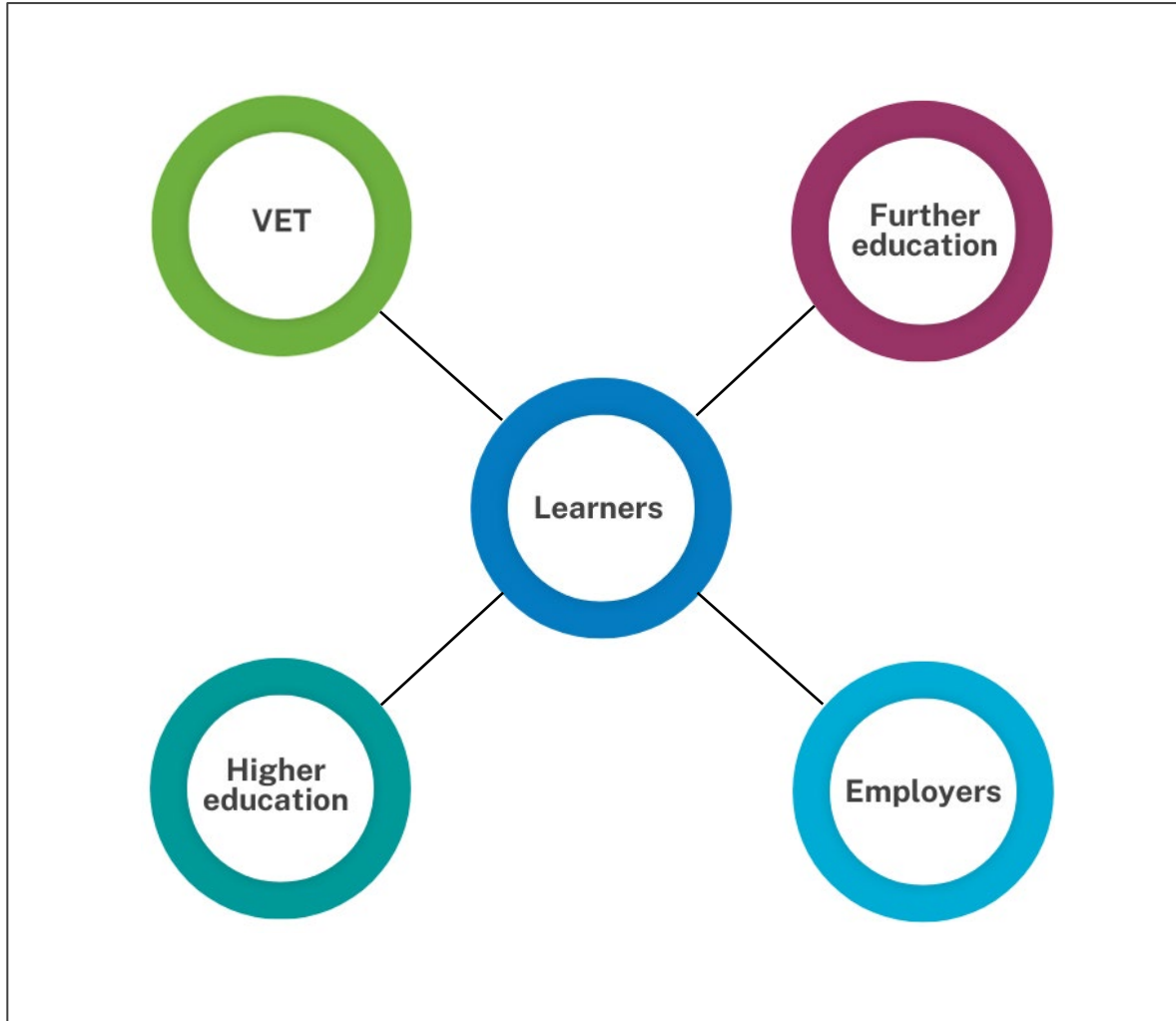
The Czech authorities have **increased knowledge and operational capacity** to implement an integrated national micro-credentials ecosystem





What is a **harmonised micro-credential ecosystem**? – Preliminary ideas

Present



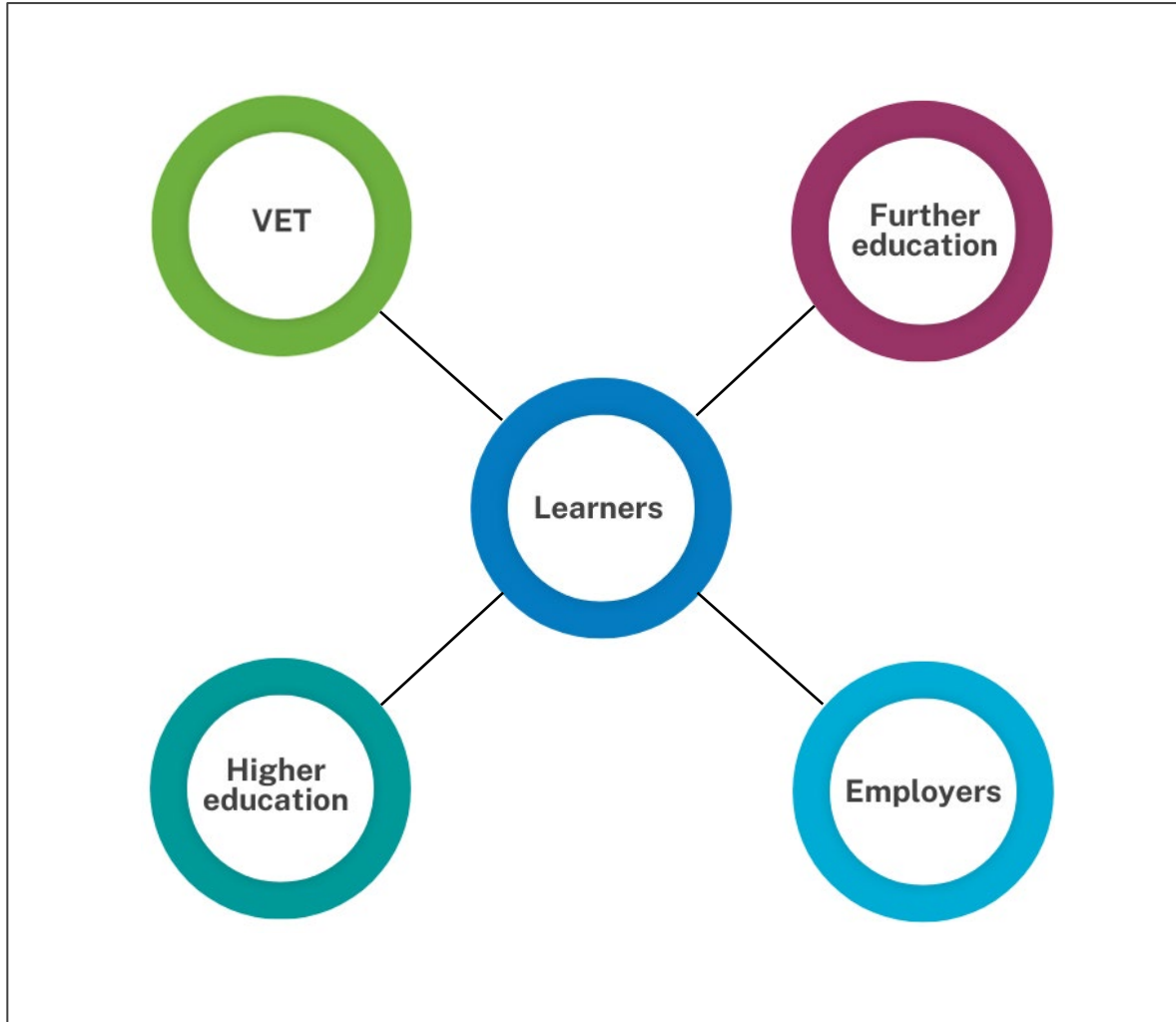
Key challenges include:

- **Sectoral approach:** Each of the three education and training sectors operates independently, guided by respective regulatory and policy frameworks (sector-specific legislation, quality assurance systems, and funding mechanisms etc.). Micro-credentials are often discussed and developed within these sectors (e.g. the pilot among 26 public HEIs).
- **Gaps between education, training and the labour market:** Despite efforts to better align education and training with labour market demands, significant gaps persist. These gaps are particularly evident in the fields of study offered and the relevance of curricula to evolving workforce needs.
- **Low engagement of disadvantaged learners:** Certain populations including the unemployed, low-skilled, older individuals, and those with lower educational attainment levels, continue to be underrepresented in adult learning participation.



What is a **harmonised micro-credential ecosystem**? – Preliminary ideas

Present



The desired future





What is a **harmonised micro-credential ecosystem**? – Preliminary ideas

Key features of a harmonised system include:

- > **Standardisation:** A unified definition and standard certification format for micro-credentials is applied across all education and training sectors.
- > **Transferability:** A mechanism ensures the recognition of learning across sectors, allowing micro-credentials to be stacked and transferred seamlessly between providers.
- > **Labour market relevance:** Micro-credential offerings are guided by a skills intelligence system informed by labour market data, ensuring alignment with workforce needs through employer collaboration.
- > **Accessibility:** Micro-credentials are designed to be inclusive, ensuring participation across all socio-economic groups.
- > **Cross-sectoral collaboration:** Providers across the three education and training sectors come together, along with industry partners, to discuss, develop, deliver and assess micro-credentials, fostering a network of trust.

The desired future





Duration: 24 months (from September 2024 to August 2026)

Initial phase

Establishing the **foundation** for the project and securing early-stage stakeholder engagement

1. Kick-off meeting

2. Inception report

Research phase

Assessing the current **landscape** in Czechia and identifying relevant international best practices

3. Baseline report

4. International report

Consultation phase

Incorporating **feedback** and perspectives from stakeholders across the country

5. Consultation report

Finalisation phase

Synthesising findings into **actionable plans**

6. Proposal for a strategy and implementation plan


7. Project description summary




Timeline and stakeholder engagement points



Initial phase

 2024 Q4
Public launch event

Research phase

 2024 Q4
Fact-finding interviews (hybrid)

 2025 Q1
International peer learning event (online)

Consultation phase



2025 Q2 and Q3
Focus group consultations (in-person in six locations)

Finalisation phase

2026 Q2
Final conference (hybrid)



Links to relevant OECD publications

- OECD (2024), Bridging Talent Shortages in Tech: Skills-first Hiring, Micro-credentials and Inclusive Outreach, Getting Skills Right, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/f35da44f-en>.
- OECD (2023), "Public policies for effective micro-credential learning", OECD Education Policy Perspectives, No. 85, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/a41f148b-en>.
- OECD (2023), "Micro-credential policy implementation in Finland, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Spain", OECD Education Policy Perspectives, No. 86, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/c3daa488-en>.
- OECD (2023), "Micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability: Uses and possibilities", OECD Education Policy Perspectives, No. 66, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9c4b7b68-en>.
- OECD (2023), Flexible adult learning provision: What it is, why it matters, and how to make it work, <https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/topic/policy-sub-issues/adult-learning/booklet-flexibility-2023.pdf>.
- OECD (2021), "Micro-credential innovations in higher education: Who, What and Why?", OECD Education Policy Perspectives, No. 39, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/f14ef041-en>.
- OECD (2021), "Quality and value of micro-credentials in higher education: Preparing for the future", OECD Education Policy Perspectives, No. 40, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9c4ad26d-en>.
- Kato, S., V. Galán-Muros and T. Weko (2020), "The emergence of alternative credentials", OECD Education Working Papers, No. 216, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/b741f39e-en>.

Děkuju!

- Contact: Shizuka.KATO@oecd.org
- OECD Education Website: www.oecd.org/education
- Higher Education Policy Website: <https://www.oecd.org/education/higher-education-policy>
- Digital platform with all data and analytical results from OECD's work on education:



<http://gpseducation.oecd.org/>