



MICRO-credentials for life-long learning and employability

The European approach to micro-credentials

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Roundtable - Introduction of micro-credentials into HE practices in SEA: barriers, enablers, actions

October 3, 2023

Universitas Brawijaya - Malang



CIMEA - Information Centre on Mobility and Academic Equivalences has been carrying out its information and consultancy activities since 1984. It is the National Information Centre concerning the procedures of qualification recognition currently in force in Italy, the Italian higher education system and the qualifications awarded at a national level. It is part of the ENIC and NARIC networks.

CIMEA

The Art of Connecting Academia



Micro-credentials and digitalization: CIMEA background



Professional certificate for Credential Evaluators, in collaboration with the Università Europea di Roma

Partner in Microbol - Micro-credentials linked to the Bologna key commitments, co-funded by Erasmus+ KA3 «Support to Policy reform».



#blockchain4people

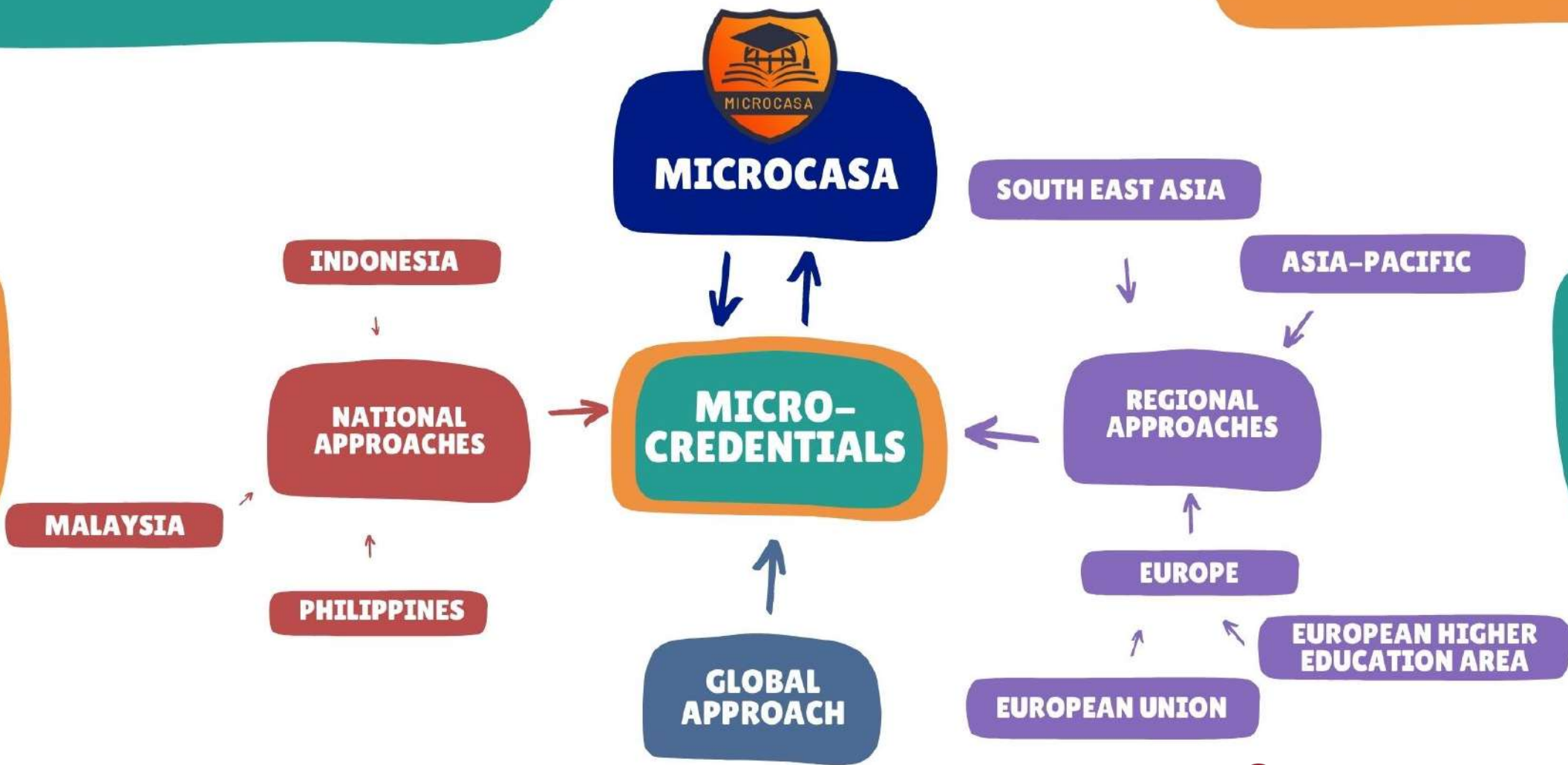
Italian representative of EU group of experts on Micro-credentials for the development of a EU approach to Micro-credentials

The Diplome service makes use of the blockchain technology in the context of credential evaluation by a "Wallet" for people, to store certified qualifications



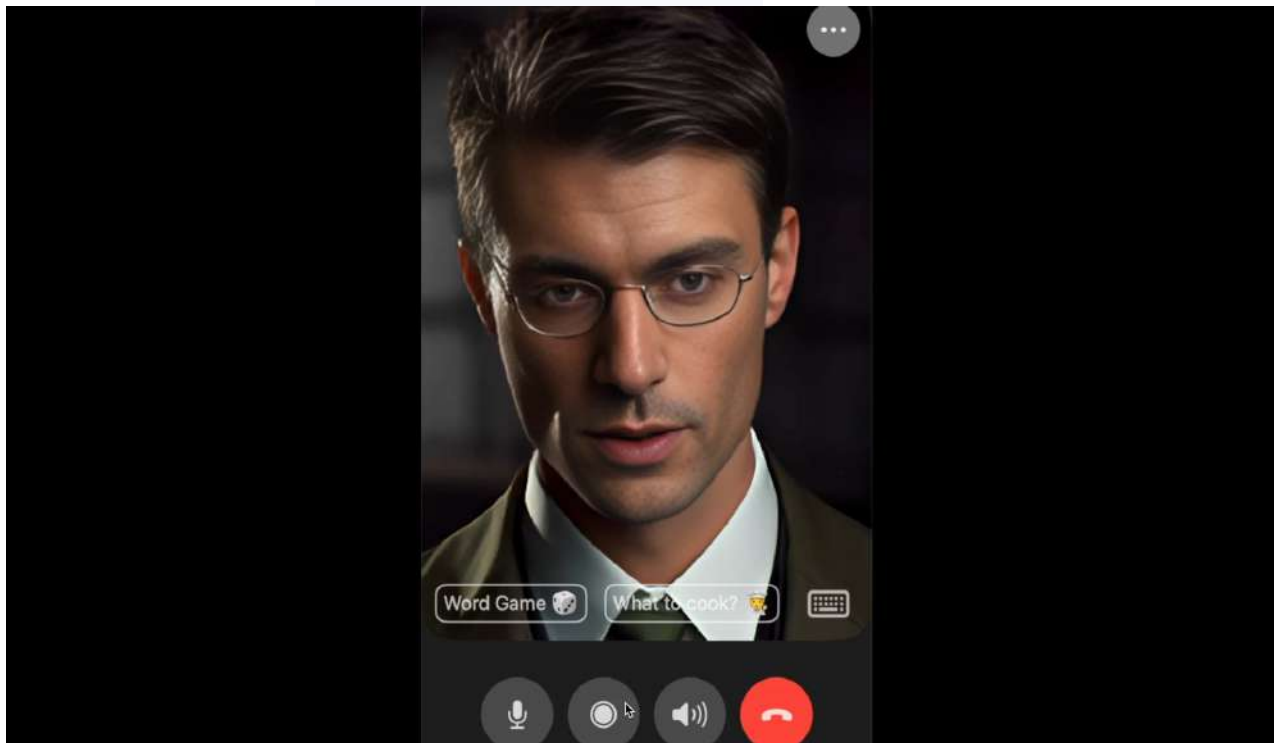
Other EU projects: EC2U, CHAISE, ARISA, Microcasa, EBSI-Vector, MARTe, Micro-Gear





Co-funded by the
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Starting from the very beginning: what are we speaking about?



Prof. Erik, researcher

The definition of micro-credentials as developed in the recent European policy

An example to understand what micro-credentials are

Why micro-credentials for learners?



- Targeted learning
- Recognition of achievements
- Lifelong learning
- Cost and Time Efficiency
- Personalized learning pathways
- Networking and career opportunities

Why micro-credentials for HEIs?



- Diversification of Offerings
- Meeting Industry Demands
- Agility and Flexibility
- Revenue Generation
- Lifelong Learning Opportunities
- Enhanced Institutional Branding

Why micro-credentials for the employers?

- Targeted Skills
- Customized Training Programmes
- Recognized Credentials
- Access to Expertise
- Talent Development and Retention
- Industry-Academia Collaboration

Why micro-credentials for the national governments?

- Enhancing Workforce Skills
- Increasing Employability
- Promoting Lifelong Learning
- Supporting Innovation and Entrepreneurship
- Strengthening the Education System

Not a new concept as such...



From short learning experiences...

- Present in legislation of some European countries: not specific regulation but allows for the provision of micro-credentials (as defined in the [European approach to MCs](#))



...to micro-credentials

A new boost and a shift in the vision and an opportunity to rethink higher education role in lifelong learning

European Union



- | | |
|----------|-------------|
| Austria | Italy |
| Belgium | Latvia |
| Bulgaria | Lithuania |
| Croatia | Luxembourg |
| Cyprus | Malta |
| Czechia | Netherlands |
| Denmark | Poland |
| Estonia | Portugal |
| Finland | Romania |
| France | Slovakia |
| Germany | Slovenia |
| Greece | Spain |
| Hungary | Sweden |
| Ireland | |

Policy context: European Union

➤ European Union:

- [European Skills Agenda](#) (June 2020): identifies micro-credentials as a **way to up-skill and re-skill professionals**, to value learning outcomes and to increase permeability and flexibility between different education sectors and pathways.
- [Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027](#) (Sept. 2020): considers micro-credentials a **tool to support the relevance, quality and inclusiveness of European education** and training at all levels.
- [European Approach to micro-credentials](#) (Feb. 2021): a common definition of micro-credentials, presentation of building blocks, and a roadmap of actions for their development and adoption in Europe. Final report delivered in February 2021 by a group of experts established by the European Commission.
- [European Education Area](#) (Feb. 2021): micro-credentials are seen as a way to **diversify the student population and to make higher education more inclusive** by 2025 by supporting lifelong learning and providing more flexible and modular learning opportunities.



Policy context: European Union

- o [European strategy for universities](#) (Jan. 2022): micro-credentials as a mean of contribute to professional **reskilling and upskilling** to meet new and emerging needs in society and labour market, and to **develop skills and competences and technological innovation for the digital and green transition.**





C 243/10 | EN | Official Journal of the European Union | 27.6.2022

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION
of 16 June 2022
on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability
(2022/C 243/02)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Articles 149 and 292, 165 and 166 thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the European Commission,

Whereas:

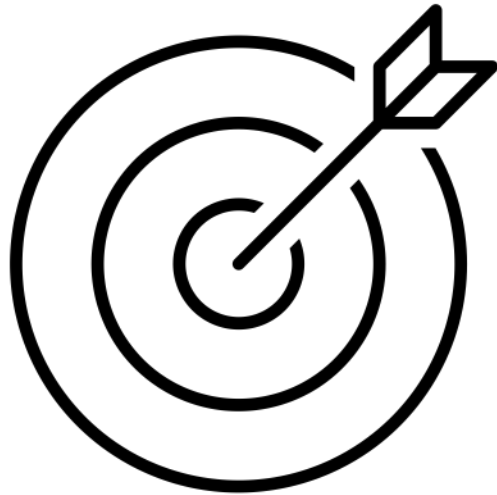
1. Within Europe, a growing number of people need to update and improve their knowledge, skills and competences to fill the gap between their formal education and training and the needs of a fast-changing society and labour market. The recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the digital and green transitions have accelerated the pace of change in how we live, learn and work. They have also highlighted the need for people to be better equipped to deal with current and future challenges. The pandemic has affected the career prospects of both young people and adults. It has also increased unemployment and damaged the physical, mental and emotional well-being of hundreds of millions of people in Europe.
2. One of the major challenges facing European businesses and employers is an insufficient supply of relevant skills in the EU labour market. Simultaneously, workers are facing unprecedented changes in how work is organised. In addition, task profiles and skills requirements are changing fundamentally due to the digital and green transitions. An outline in Council Decision (EU) 2021/1848 of 15 October 2021 on guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States (1), Member States and the Union are to work towards developing a coordinated strategy for employment and particularly for promoting a skilled, trained and adaptable workforce, as well as labour markets that are future-oriented and responsive to seasonal change. Continuous upskilling and reskilling are essential for workers to respond to the needs of their current job or to transition to new jobs and expanding sectors, such as the green and digital sectors, in particular in the context of demographic shifts.
3. People need access to quality teaching and learning provided in different ways and settings, to develop their personal, social, cultural and professional knowledge, skills and competences. There have been calls for education and training systems to become more flexible and to find solutions to deliver more learner-centred, accessible and inclusive learning to a wider range of profiles. Non-formal processes of education and training are also addressing this need by providing new and innovative opportunities for upskilling and reskilling.
4. An effective culture of lifelong learning is key to ensuring that everyone has the knowledge, skills and competences they need to thrive in society, the labour market and their personal lives. It is essential that people can access quality and relevant education and training, upskilling and reskilling throughout their lives. Lifelong learning opportunities should be part of the long-term strategy of education and training institutions to improve their responsiveness to the fast-changing needs of employers and learners. This would enable a more diverse body of learners (including graduates of these institutions and other adult learners) to upskill and reskill. It is recommended that higher education institutions, vocational education and training (VET) institutions, adult learning providers and other providers of micro-credentials, including employers, cooperate and integrate the latest research findings in the design and update of learning opportunities.

(1) OJ L 378, 30.10.2021, p. 1.

Council Recommendation on micro-credentials

- ➔ **WHO:** Council of the European Union
- ➔ **WHAT:** common definition of micro-credentials, actions to create an 'ecosystem for micro-credentials', recommendations on their use for learners, support uptake and developments
- ➔ **WHERE:** European Union
- ➔ **WHEN:** adopted in June 2022
- ➔ **WHY:** upskill and reskill (green and digital transition, post-pandemic recovery), putting all the diversity under a common framework

Objectives



- ‘enabling individuals to **acquire, update and improve the knowledge, skills and competences** they need to thrive in an evolving labour market and society (...)
- supporting the preparedness of providers of micro-credentials to **enhance the quality, transparency, accessibility and flexibility of the learning offering** in order to empower individuals to forge personalised learning and career pathways;
- fostering **inclusiveness, access and equal opportunities** and contributing to the achievement of resilience, social fairness and prosperity for all (...).
- Member States are recommended to use micro-credentials, where appropriate, as a **tool to strengthen and complement existing learning opportunities**, increase participation in **lifelong learning**

Source: [Council Recommendation of 16 June 2022 on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability](#) 2022 16

Definition of micro-credentials



'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.

Standard elements



- identification of the **learner**
- **title** of the micro-credential
- **country**(ies)/region(s) of the issuer
- **awarding body**(ies)
- date of issuing
- **learning outcomes**
- notional **workload** needed to achieve the learning outcomes (in ECTS, wherever possible)
- **level** (and cycle, if applicable) of the learning experience leading to the micro-credential (EQF, Qualifications Frameworks in the European Higher Education Area), if applicable
- type of **assessment**
- form of participation in the learning activity
- type of **quality assurance** used to underpin the micro-credential

Source: [Council Recommendation of 16 June 2022 on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability](#) 2022



European Higher Education Area (EHEA)



Source: www.ehea.info

- | | | |
|------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Albania | Iceland | Slovakia |
| Andorra | Ireland | Slovenia |
| Armenia | Italy | Spain |
| Austria | Kazakhstan | Sweden |
| Azerbaijan | Latvia | Switzerland |
| Belarus | Liechtenstein | Türkiye |
| Belgium | Malta | Ukraine |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | Lithuania | United Kingdom |
| Bulgaria | Luxembourg | |
| Croatia | g | |
| Cyprus | Malta | |
| Czech Republic | Moldova | |
| Denmark | Montenegro | |
| Estonia | Netherlands | |
| Finland | North Macedonia | |
| France | Norway | |
| Georgia | Poland | |
| Germany | Portugal | |
| Greece | Romania | |
| Holy See | Russia | |
| Hungary | San Marino | |
| | Serbia | |

Rome Ministerial Communiqué, 2020



«**Flexible and open learning paths**, part of the original inspiration for the Bologna Process, are important aspects of **student-centred learning** and are in increasing demand in our societies. In addition to full degree programmes, many higher education institutions offer or plan to offer **smaller units of learning**, which enable learners to develop or update their cultural, professional, and transversal skills and competences at various stages in their lives. We ask the BFUG to explore how and to what extent these **smaller, flexible units, including those leading to micro-credentials**, can be defined, developed, implemented and recognised by our institutions using EHEA tool» (Rome Communiqué, Nov. 2020)



MICROBOL - Micro-credentials linked to the Bologna Key Commitments



- **Goal:** explore whether and how the existing Bologna tools can be used and/or need to be adapted to be applicable to micro-credentials in QA, recognition, ECTS and QF
- **Outcomes:**
 - [Desk research report on micro-credentials](#) (August 2020)
 - [Report on the state of play of micro-credentials](#) in the European Higher Education Area (February 2021)
 - [Recommendations](#) from the MICROBOL project for the European Commission's proposal for a Council recommendation on micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability (July 2021)
 - Common [Framework for Micro-credentials](#) in the EHEA (March 2022)

Diversity as a strength – need for common understanding and approach

Common Framework for Micro-credentials in the EHEA

Common definition

A micro-credential is a certified small volume of learning

Purpose

Micro-credentials are designed to provide the learner with specific knowledge, skills, and competences that respond to societal, personal, cultural or labour market needs

- A way to increase and diversify **lifelong learning provision** to support individual learning pathways and widen access to higher education
- They provide a timely and relevant response to **learners' and labour market needs**
- **Collaboration** is an important aspect for the provision of micro-credentials



Common Framework for Micro-credentials in the EHEA

Common Framework for Micro-credentials in the EHEA

Use

Credentials are owned by the learner, are portable and may be combined into larger credentials or qualifications

- Micro-credentials can be earned before, during and after higher education degree programmes and as a new way to certify competences acquired earlier in life
- **Learners** are **at the heart** of micro-credentials
- **Catalogues** of existing micro-credentials can be an important source of information for learners
- **Certificates** for micro-credentials can **be awarded** in many formats
- **Link between education and research:** micro-credentials can facilitate a smooth knowledge transfer → learning opportunities for the benefit of society



MICROBOL framework

➤ Link to Bologna key commitments

Quality Assurance

- Providers are responsible to assure the quality of the micro-credentials they offer through their internal QA processes
- External QA should focus on the institutional approach to micro-credentials
- A register of trustworthy providers could support the acceptance and recognition of micro-credentials

Recognition

- Micro-credentials can be assessed in line with the Lisbon Recognition Convention principles, provided that all constitutive elements are properly displayed
- A micro-credential can be recognized on basis of a proof of the learning outcomes achieved by a learner, according to transparent requirements and after assessment

Qualifications Framework & ECTS

- Micro-credentials should be included in the NQF, whenever possible
- The learning outcomes approach can be useful when developing micro-credentials
- ECTS, as a recognisable system, can support the development and description of micro-credentials

Source: microcredentials.eu



The global perspective

Towards a common definition of micro-credentials

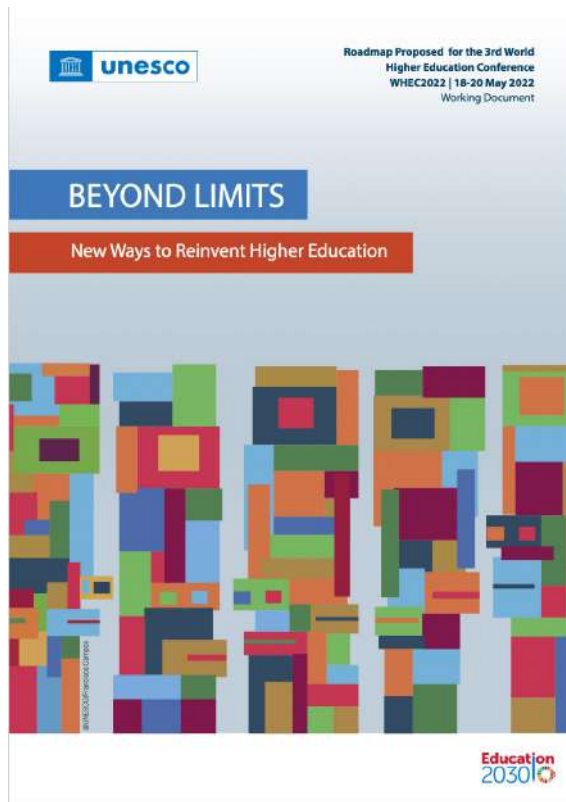
- Policy analysis: where are we at with micro-credentials?
- Towards a shared definition of micro-credentials
- The proposed definition of micro-credentials
- Conclusion and next steps



Definition:

- Is a record of **focused learning achievement** verifying what the learner knows, understands or can do.
- Includes **assessment** based on clearly defined standards and is awarded by a trusted provider.
- Has **standalone 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**.²⁶

Beyond limits. New ways to reinvent Higher Education



- ➔ **Lifelong learning approach**, aimed at serving the diverse education needs of youth and adults, is one of the six major challenges that need to be overcome in reinventing Higher Education, according to the Roadmap proposed for the UNESCO 3rd World Higher Education Conference on 18-20 May 2022 [“Beyond limits. New ways to reinvent Higher Education”](#)
- ➔ **Flexible learning pathways, recognition, mobility, and internationalization** are one of the 9 ways to navigate towards 2030.



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Thank You

For Your Listening

