

Non-formal learning and micro credentials



SKILLS MEETUP Sweden 2023





Microcredentials – a new opportunity for lifelong learning?

Findings from Cedefop project on Microcredentials for VET and labour market learning

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Microcredentials for VET and labour market learning

Three key objectives

Mapping microcredentials in European LM-related education, training and learning

Microcredentials and evolving qualifications systems

Microcredentials and the added value for end-users

**Cedefop's
Advisory Group
on
Microcredentials**



Which are the distinguishing features of micro-credentials?

- MCs an **umbrella term** – uncertainty linked to the **naming and function**
- MCs most often indicate the **title, the date of issue, the identity of the holder, the provider and achieved LOs.**
- More **diverse** learners, e.g. employees, new hires, individual learners, customers of a company
- Non-formal MCs address the **limitation** of formal QSs to timely respond to labour market needs

An aerial, wide-angle photograph of a coastal city, likely Thessaloniki, Greece. The view is framed by a curved balcony railing in the foreground. The city features several large, ornate, light-colored buildings with red-tiled roofs and arched windows. A large, paved square with some greenery and palm trees is visible in the center. The city extends to the sea, where a blue promenade and buildings are visible. The sky is clear and blue. A semi-transparent blue banner with white text is overlaid on the bottom right of the image.

Microcredentials and evolving qualifications systems

Two main conceptual elements

- We adopted a **wider** 'dual' perspective regarding qualifications
 - 'qualified' in the sense of having obtained a formal qualification
 - 'qualified' by virtue of having showed the ability to carry out a job effectively
- **Traditional vs modern** qualifications: microcredentials have a number of overlapping functions with modern ones:
 - promote lifelong learning
 - enable alternative learning pathways
 - provide different options for progression
 - facilitate the partial recognition and validation of prior learning
 - are defined by stakeholders





MCs and qualification systems/frameworks

- MCs do not necessarily present a new form of recognition but a way to **define better and standardise** the already existing offers.
- Incorporation of MCs into national qualification systems **varies substantially** between European countries
- Two main developments paving the way for the inclusion of MCs in NQFs are:
 - ***modularisation of qualifications (WA1)***
 - ***opening up of NQFs to qualifications awarded *outside formal education and training.****
- Lack of adequate **quality assurance** practices comes as one of the main hindering factors to the utilisation of microcredentials in RPL.

Microcredentials discussion at national policy level

Policy discussions
at an initial stage

BE-FL – BE-FR –
BU – CY- CZ –
DK – FR – DE -
EL

Advanced policy
discussions

NL – PL - SK

Legislation or draft
regulations
already introduced

EE – IE – LV - ES

Indicative examples of
countries

Focusing on sectoral and professional skills certificates

Can we consider them as **microcredentials**?

Adding an extra level of **complexity**...

Resemblance to microcredentials prominent when awarded to individuals and/or training programme

Not all microcredentials enjoy the same level of **trust** and **quality assurance** practices as sectoral and professional skills certificates, so possible to conceptualise them as a type of microcredentials that enjoys **higher visibility, recognition** and **trust**.



Main characteristics of microcredentials in the manufacturing and retail sectors

Sector	Title of microcredential	Location	Workload	Link to ECTS or ECVET specified	Mode of delivery		
Manufacturing	Safety procedures in medical processes	France	12 modules 17 days	NO	In person		
Manufacturing	Quality management system and welding coordination	Denmark	22.5 hours, 3 days	NO	In person		
Manufacturing	International Welding Engineer (IWE)	International (41 countries)	448 hours	ECVET	person/blended		
Manufacturing	International Welding Practitioner (IWP)	International (41 countries)	150 hours	ECVET	In person/blended	YES	YES
Manufacturing		Germany, France, Italy, Spain, UK, Portugal and Turkey.	60-70 hours	NO	Online/blended		
Manufacturing		Austria	1 month (fulltime)	NO	In person		
Manufacturing		Malta	125 hours	ECVET	In person	YES	YES
Industrial		Czechia	NS	NO	In person	NO	NS

Highly targeted/specialised types of training that are designed around specific occupational/professional

Focus on new and emerging topics and technologies

Mode of delivery differs; it can be in-person training, online or blended.

23 out of the 39 mapped microcredentials explicitly describe their learning outcomes. The remaining either do not mention their LOs or present them in the form of content description

Emerging questions!

- ❖ Can certificates awarded following solely the completion of a performance-based assessment be considered microcredentials?
- ❖ Should microcredentials be regulated, standardised, or formalised to mimic the nature of existing sectoral and professional skills certificates?
- ❖ Is there a need to 're-brand' a well-functioning procedure that leads to a certificate that is well-accepted by the labour market?

Opening up qualifications frameworks to microcredentials

- ✓ **CZ:** The NSK functions as a framework for qualifications obtained outside formal education and training, responding directly to the needs of the labour market. **Vocational qualifications** could be considered a type of MCs, as they fit the European Commission's definition of MCs.
- ✓ **MT:** Some **MQF awards** could be considered as a type of MCs. One of the aims of the 2023 update of the referencing report, is to adequately deal with MCs in order to be well integrated and regulated in the education system.
- ✓ **NL:** The Dutch Government sees classification of MCs into the NQF and their referencing to the EQF as crucial for **transparency**.
- ✓ **PL:** Some **market qualifications** are considered as microcredentials; increasing number is included in the integrated qualifications system (IQS);
- ✓ **SI:** **supplementary qualifications** are comparable to microcredentials

Linking modularisation to microcredentials

Modularisation common in **adult learning**; modules are often considered similar to microcredentials. Indicative examples: BE-FL, BE-FR, CZ, DK, HU,

In HR, the term '**micro-qualification**' (*'mikrokvāifikacija'*) was introduced in the 2021. Compiled units of learning outcomes (**micro-qualifications**) lead to short training programmes and/or qualifications at EQF/NQF levels 2-4.

In IE, the modular nature of the QS accommodates **free-standing qualifications** and qualifications as **small as five credits**; credentials smaller than this can be used as stepping stones into qualifications on the NFQ by being aggregated and used in recognition of prior learning.

In ES, the new system of formal vocational training spans from **micro-training to degrees and specialisation courses**, based on learning progression. Micro-training modules are **partial and cumulative**, and lead to a partial accreditation of competence.

Microcredentials and recognition of prior learning

- ✓ Microcredentials as **outcomes** of the RPL process
- ✓ Microcredentials, as a **tool of RPL**, can be used to:
 - ✓ obtain a partial qualification (e.g., as in CY, DE, IE, NL and ES);
 - ✓ obtain a full formal qualification (this also relates to accumulation/stackability of MCs) (e.g., as in EE, IE, LUX and NO);
 - ✓ gain access to an education programme, including making the transition from VET to higher education (e.g., as in BE-FR and IE);
 - ✓ gain exemption from part(s) of an education programme and/or shorten its duration (e.g., as in Belgium-FL, DK and ES);
 - ✓ gain exemption from part(s) of a professional qualification (e.g. as in BE-FL and FR);





**Added value of microcredentials for
end users**

Research questions (added value)

1. For end-users to trust micro-credentials, which conditions must be met to ensure portability and transferability

- information to be contained;
- trust to be generated?

2. For individual learners to make use of micro-credentials, what support can be envisaged?

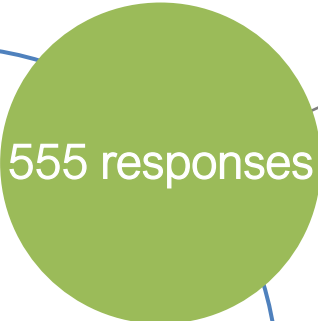
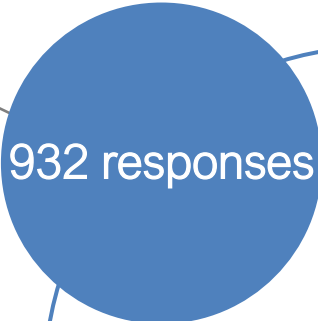
3. How could micro-credentials play a more targeted role in supporting 'age-neutral' systems for VET, strengthening the focus of up-skilling and re-skilling?



Surveys

Students and adult learners

25 countries
550 complete responses
382 partial responses
50.9% Male / 48.2% Female / 0.9% Other

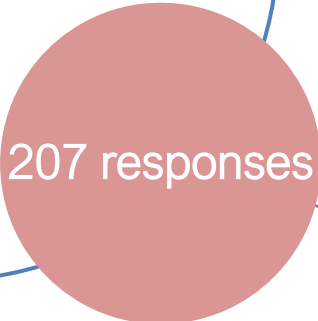
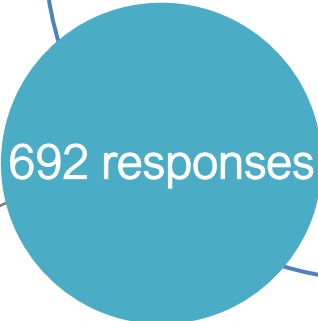


Individuals who are not employed

16 countries
261 complete responses
294 partial responses
42.2% Male / 55.7% Female / 2.1% Other

Employees

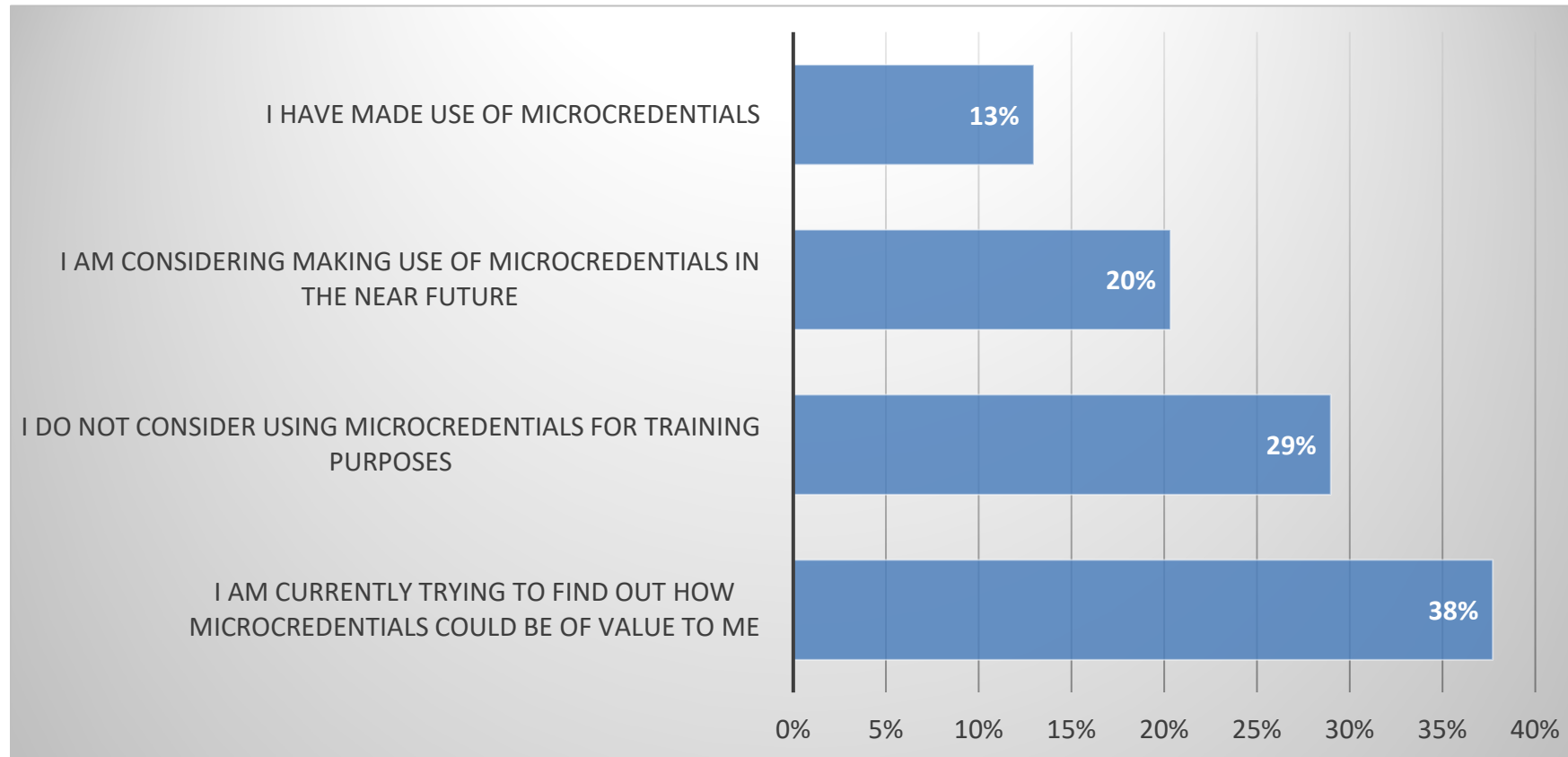
28 countries
370 complete responses
322 partial responses
36.4% Male / 62.8% Female / 0.8% Other



Employers

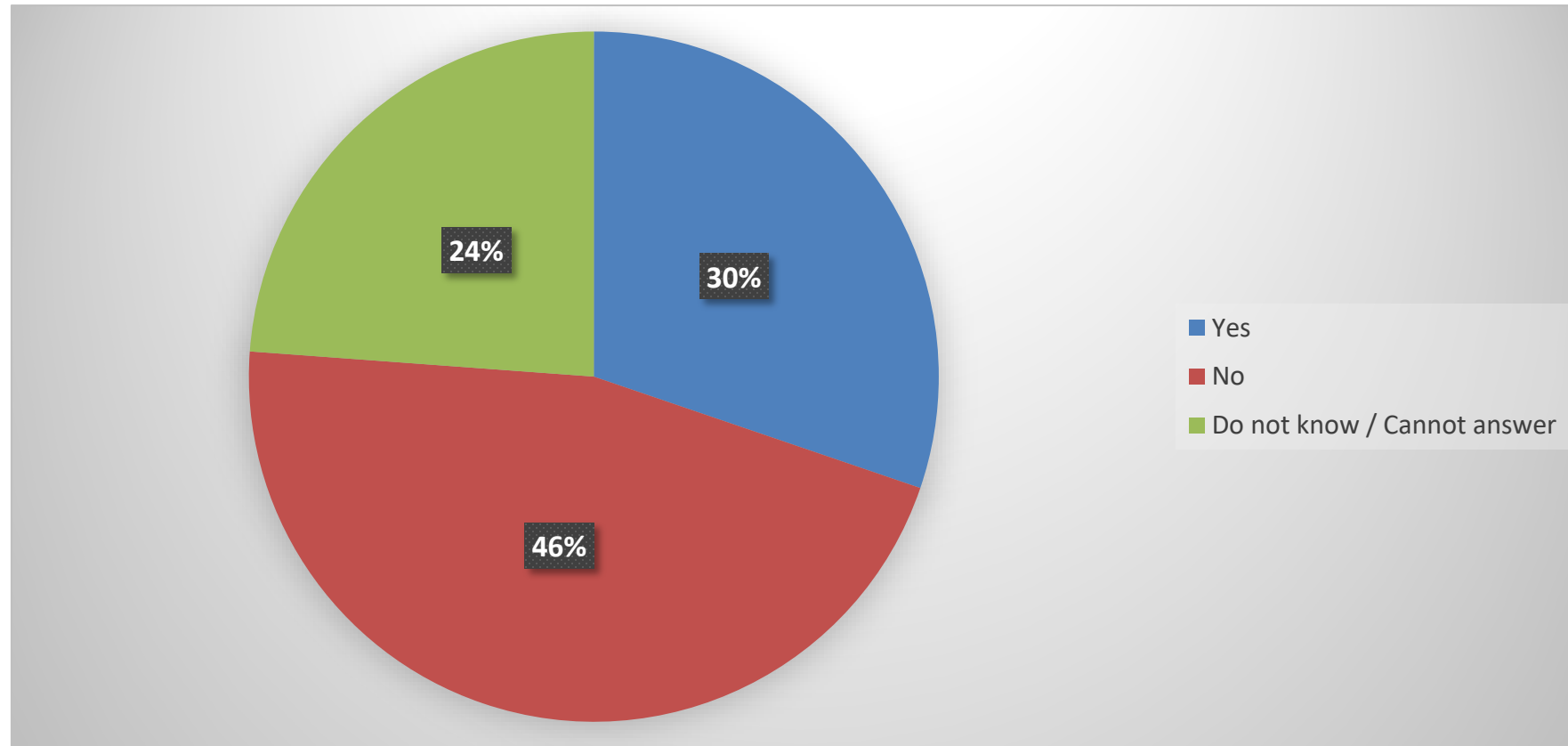
21 countries
83 complete responses
124 partial responses

Would you **consider** or **have you already made use** of microcredentials for training purposes?



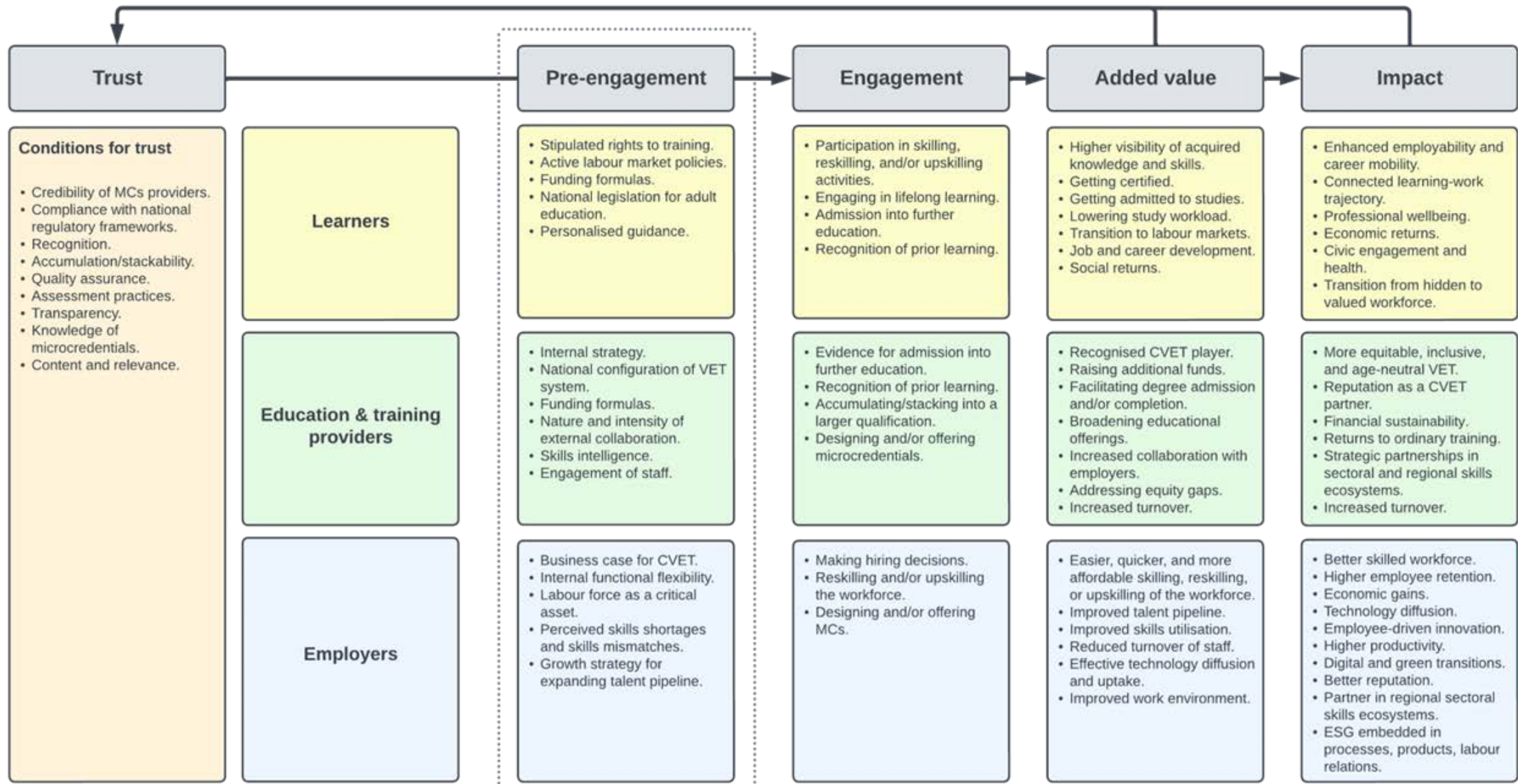
Source: Survey of stakeholders representing employees, students and adult learners and individuals who are currently unemployed (N=1180).

Have you experienced **in practice** that microcredentials helped you get promoted?



Source: Survey of stakeholders representing employees, students and adult learners and individuals who are currently unemployed

A complex MC landscape: establishing trust - generating added value



Trust in microcredentials is **contextual**

Quality Assurance

- Nature of assessment
- Reputation and credibility of the issuing provider

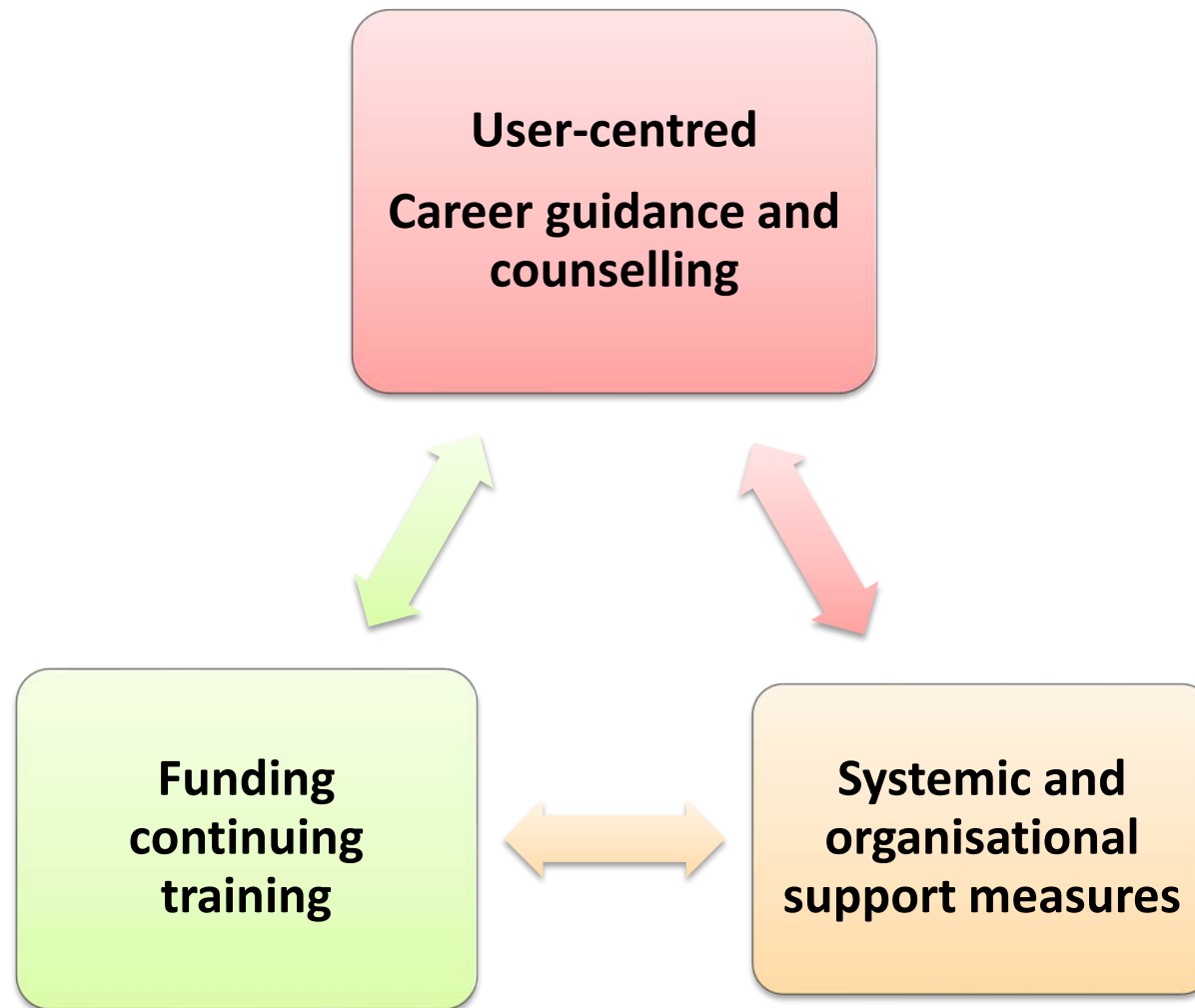
LM outcomes

- Information and guidance about labour market
- Proliferation of microcredentials under a range of different names
- Range of providers/diverse provision

Indicative examples of why/how MCs are trusted in **different local contexts**

Country	Example
Estonia	High trust amongst learners reflected in the competition for admission to the microcredentials offered by Estonian universities. A quality assurance system is planned to raise trust in MCs.
Latvia	Up-skilling courses and VET modules addressing a particular competence (both leading to certificates) are widely used and well-trusted. This is due to a well-functioning national QA.
Poland	Microcredentials are widely trusted by employers and learners . Still, not trusted by the state education and training providers: due to lack of understanding, governing regulations, and clear quality assurance standards.
Slovenia	Microcredentials accredited and included in the NQF are the ones most-trusted. For the rest, the trust depends on the perceived quality of content and training provider .

Ways to support **engagement** with microcredentials



Emerging questions

- Could microcredentials become a selection mechanism that increases *inequities*? Is there a risk of qualifications unbundling?
- Does the provision still remain *fragmented* and *disconnected*?
- Are there sufficient *user-centred* services that could help learners and employers make informed decisions about learning options?





CEDEFOP

European Centre for the Development
of Vocational Training



Microcredentials a labour market megatrend

22 and 23 June 2023

Virtual event

#microcredentials



Thank you

For further information:

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Project page <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/projects/microcredentials-labour-market-education-and-training>

Podcast: <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/podcasts/episode-6-microcredentials-are-they-here-stay>

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Microcredentials and non-formal learning in a Nordic perspective

21.4.2023

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Expert network for Validation, NVL
MC-working group



Focus points of this presentation and opening question

“Microcredentials are evolving as a labour market megatrend”

Or, you may ask:

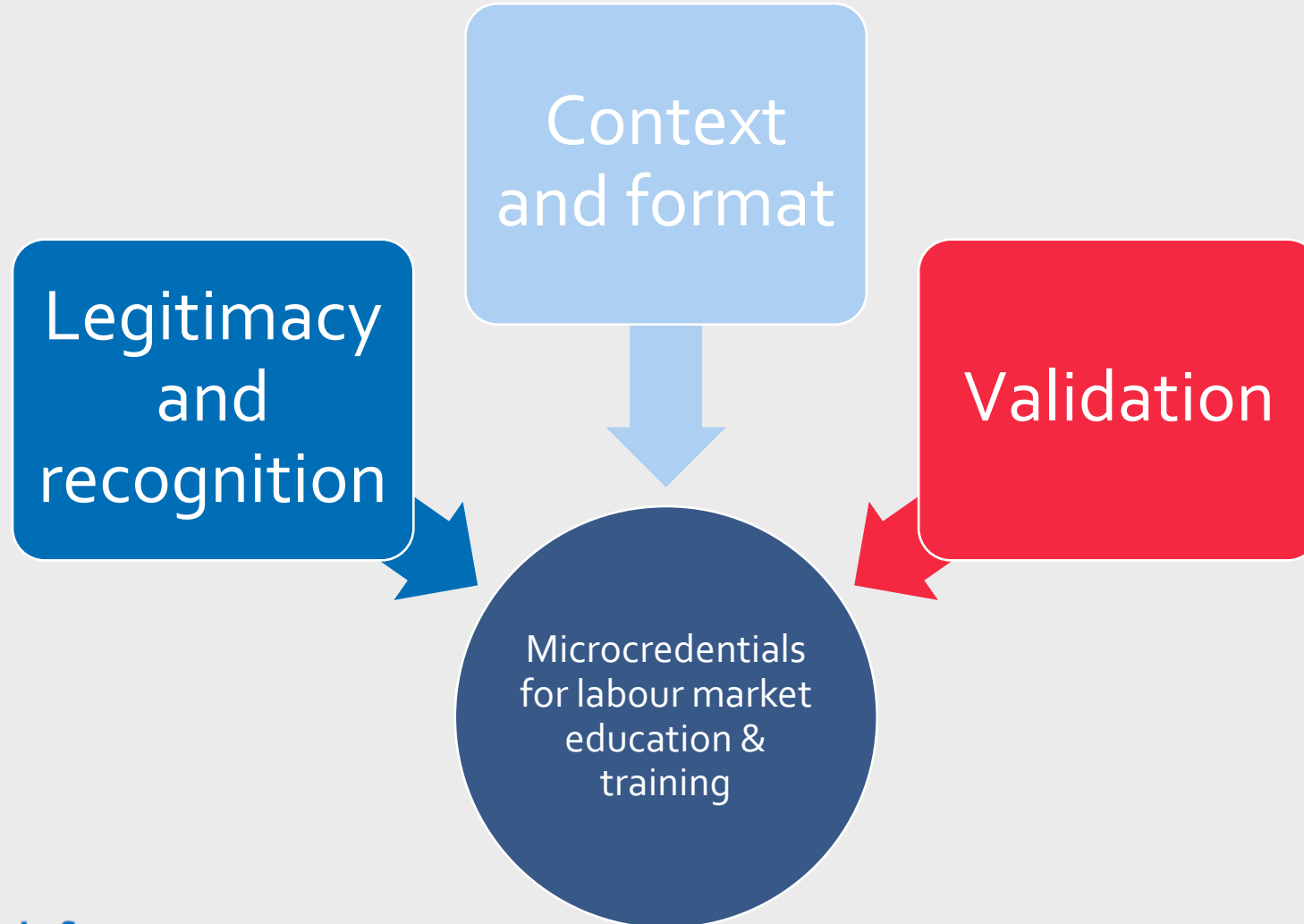
“Are microcredentials the adequate response to labour market megatrends”?

Frame and focus points for the MC working group

- Mapping of smaller learning units, which can be accommodated within a broad perception of microcredentials (EU definition)
- Our work is well-informed and inspired by Cedefops research about MC and the ECR – A European approach to Microcredentials.
- **NVL working group, focus points:**
 - Mapping of Mc in existing formats in the Nordic countries and self-governing areas
 - Context and format
 - Legitimacy and recognition
 - Validation



***An answer to this question should include the relationship of elements
– also implying non-formal learning:***



First element: Context and format – formal / non-formal / in combination?

Formal education

- Clearly defined, curriculum based learning / structured in modules or subjects
- Learning at distance to application of the content / not one-to-one outcome

Labour market

- Work task oriented learning / structured in relation to work task
- Same context for learning and application of new skills / one-to-one outcome

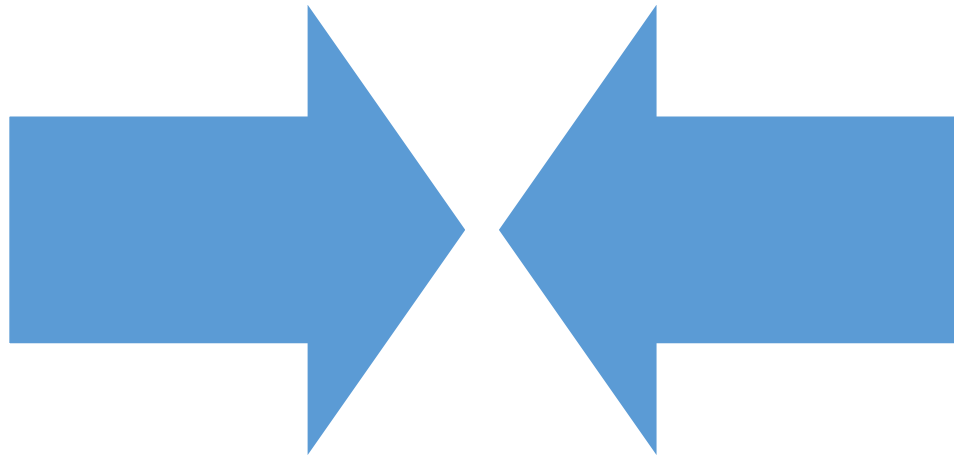
3rd Sector

- Diverse learning content / "Things take place across topics and activities in an environment with focus on resources, room for differences and community"
- Not structured in terms of certain standards, but aiming at searching, deliberate and develop the talents of each individual participant.



Second Element: Legitimacy and recognition Within the sector – and – across sectors??

Like this?



Or like this?



Something needs to be done with the learning outcome to ensure legitimacy and recognition across sectors

Or, you could ask: who provides **legitimacy** and **recognition** according to context and format for the microcredential in question?

Third element: Validation

(and back to the question):

*Are microcredentials the proper response to labour market megatrends, like:
Green transition - Changing demography - Global competition - Growing inequality, etc.*

- **There is an increasing focus on the importance of non-formal learning / transversal skills**
- **Transversal skills are highly recognised as essential competences in a rapid transition to new competence requirements (EU Skills Agenda 2020 and 2030),**
- **Formal education systems are criticized for a too long response time regarding development of new educations**
- **There is a corresponding skills supply requirement of being able to assess prior learning in relation to contextual, work-related settings**
- **Validation of prior learning is predominantly, across the Nordic countries carried out by the formal education institutions – against standards, objectives and criteria for the corresponding education. So what about prior achieved in other contexts?**

Validation and microcredentials Challenges in Validation (systems)

In the NVL MC working group, we are specifically concerned about this question:

In which ways is VPL an element of microcredentials?

- *either* as assessment and recognition towards learning outcome for a formal qualification, with the application of legal framework and practice – and hereby providing the option of stacking mc to a formal degree,
- *or* as validation of prior learning with the possibility of achieving a Microcredential, thus implying a recognition in the business- and working life context and hereby ensures the owner of a certain mc to make use of this in relevant professional areas.

Considerations and some critical questions?

Is the principle of stackability an essential principle for the design of microcredentials?

Are pitfalls embedded in the principle?

In order to highlight the importance of non-formal learning in the requirements for skills supply – how do validation systems provide an adequate framework? Validation systems are linked to providers of formal education.

Are existing microcredentials – mainly supply-driven? *or* demand-driven?

Where is the highest motivation for users? For end-users?



OECD, 17.3.2023

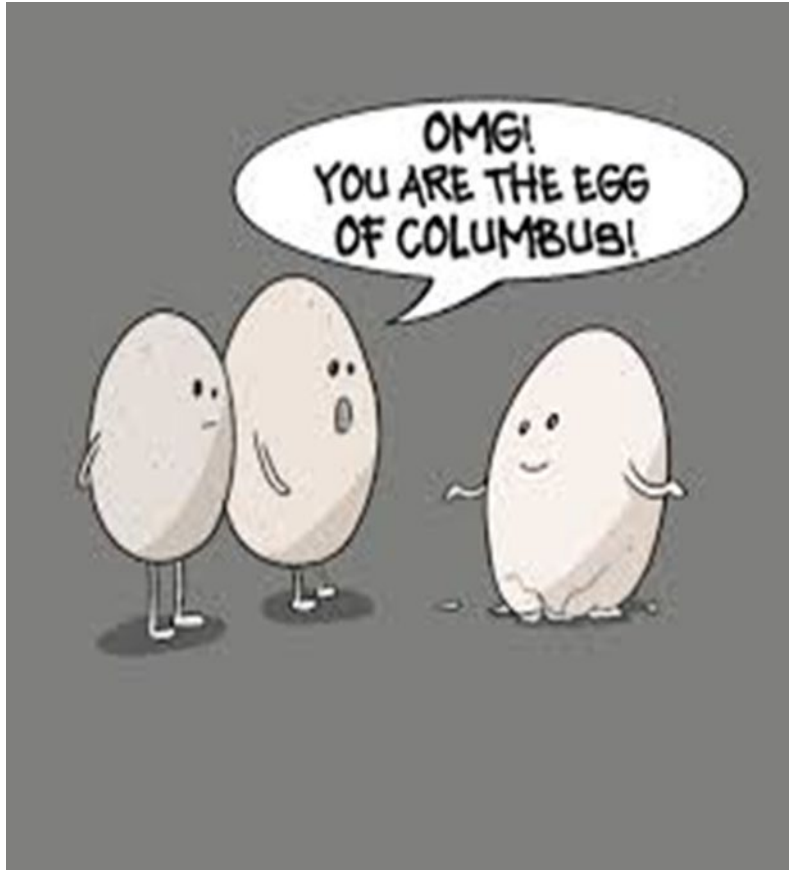
State of the art of MC for lifelong learning and employability

OECD publishing



- *“Policy makers, educators and trainers across the world envision microcredentials to be an innovation with a multitude of potential uses and benefits – a sort of all purpose solution for problems confronting education, training and labour market systems.”*

OECD – MC for lifelong Learning and employability



“However, evidence on the value and impact of micro-credentials remains scarce, limiting commitment on the part of stakeholders”.

Microcredentials is not a Columbus egg – but:
a new perspective on upskilling and learning, to be developed, designed and implemented within a multitude of variations in order to provide the adequate response in a fast changing world, societies and labour markets.

Thank you

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Kompetenspasset

The Skills passport – A pilot for micro credentials



ARBETSFÖRMEDLINGEN
SWEDISH PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT SERVICE



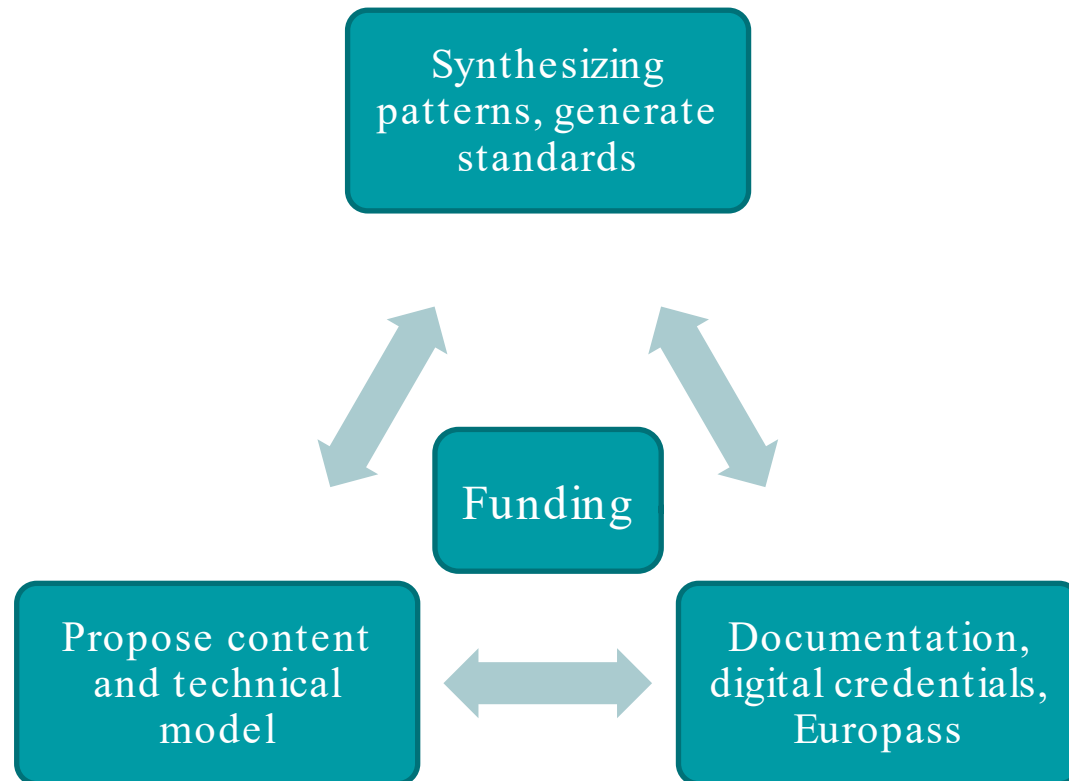
Research
Institutes
of Sweden

Kompetenspasset – an explorative project

- Quality Assured model for micro-credentials in Sweden – in tune with the EU recommendation.
- Financed by Vinnova, Sweden's innovation agency
 - ✓ Common definition
 - ✓ Standardised description, documentation and issuance
 - ✓ Principles for portability, stackability
 - ✓ Formalisation of non-formal learning/ modules of formal learning
 - ✓ Quality Assurance

Project and pilots

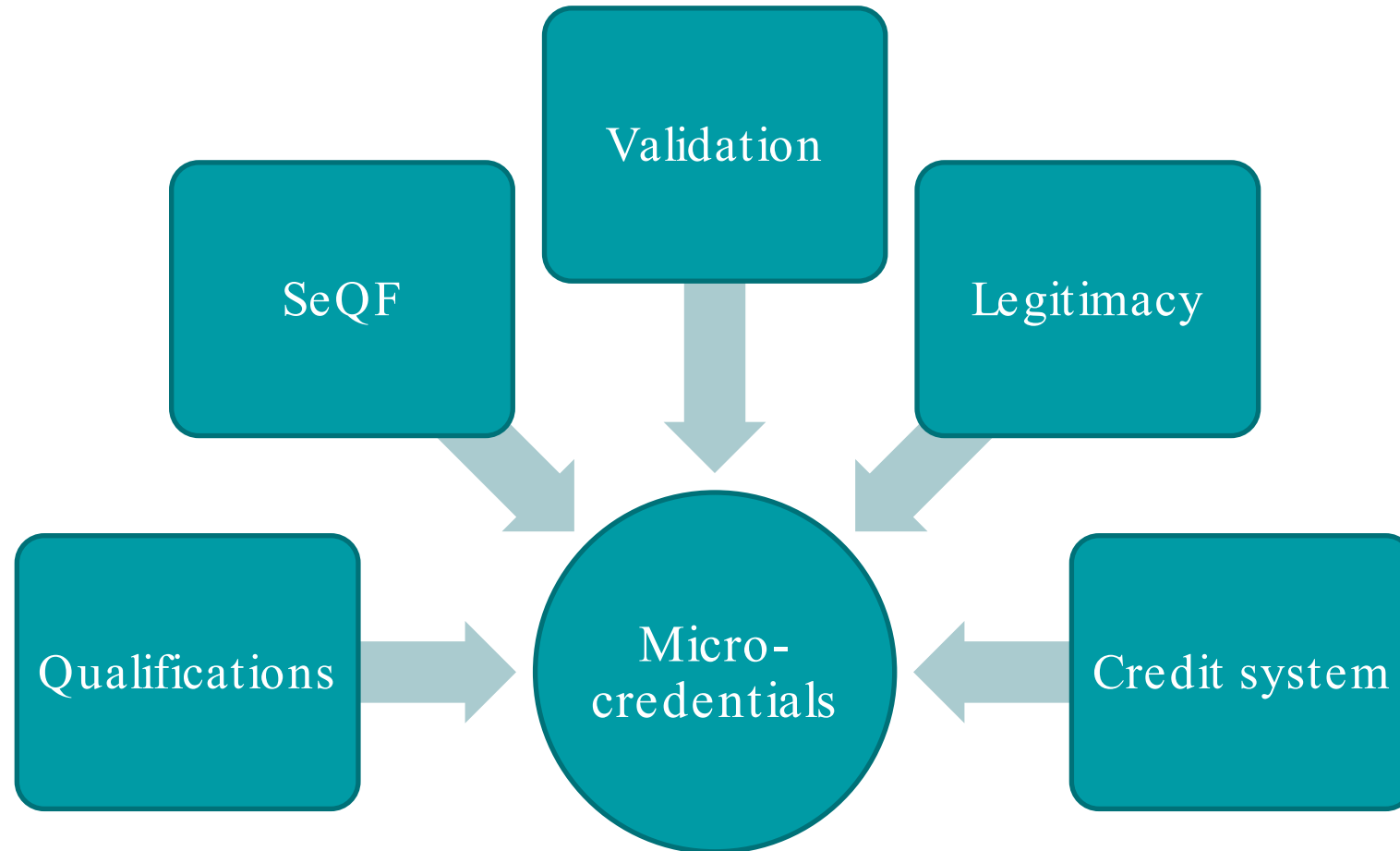
Project: Kompetenzpasset



Five pilots

- Project managers
- Added value
- What are the needs?
- When is it useful to develop micro-credentials?

Exploring relations





Micro-credentials and Arbetsförmedlingen (PES)

Challenges for PES and the potential of micro-credentials



Unemployed individuals



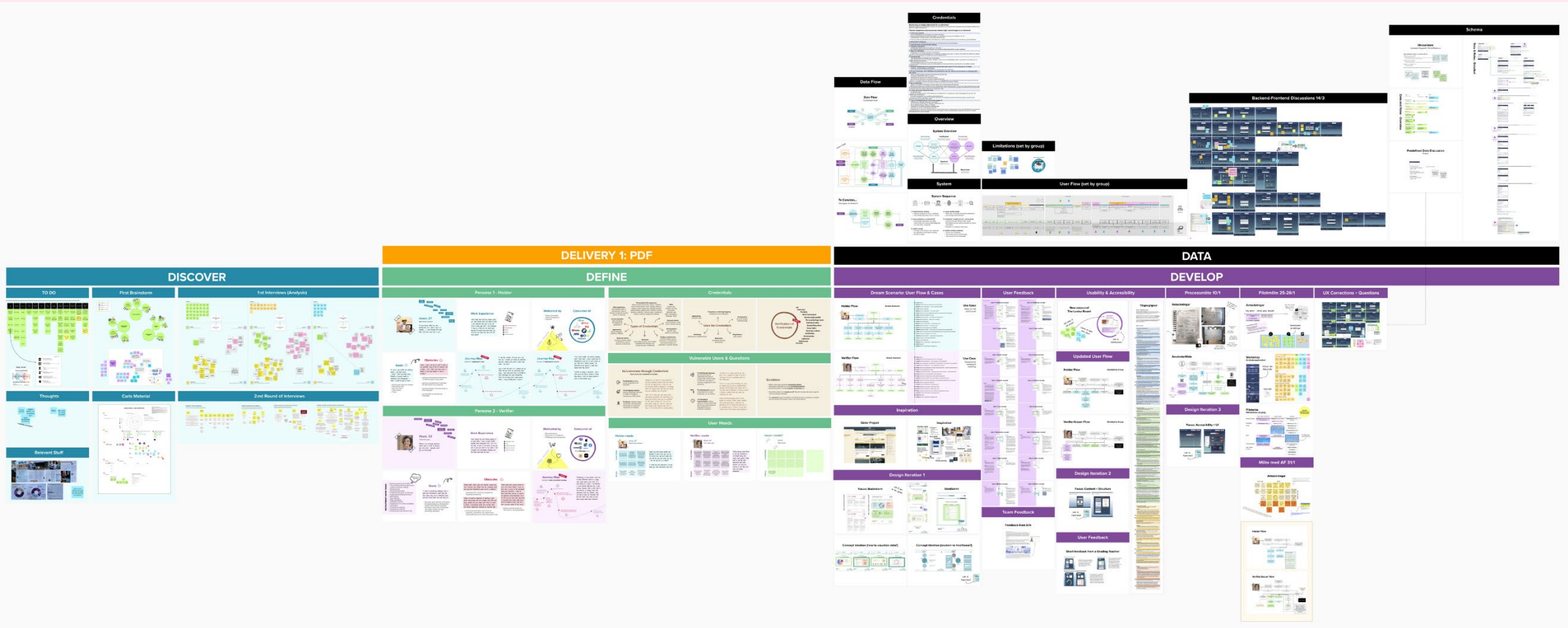
More precise matching

Reflections from our experience

- The approval from the business/ the sectors seems to be crucial.
- Next step:
 - Our plan is to have micro-credential within the service sector in september
 - No decisions has been made so far
- Could PES produce, issue and "own" micro-credentials?

How will it work?

- small scale piloting with real people, needs and data



How will it work?

- small scale piloting with real people, needs and data

A defined system to:

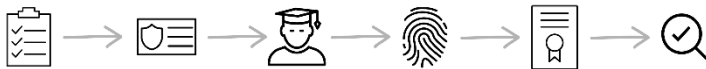
- Create
- Issue
- Own
- and Share

Micro-credentials

+ **data model** for Micro-credentials

System

System Sequence



1. Fixed technical schema

- Filled in as basis for micro credential
- One initially (probably more in future)

2. Issuer publishes a credential ID

- Including ID, start date, end date, schema ID, and various labels/tags that are part of the credential

3. Holder enrolls

- Through searching for the credential ID, selecting it and finally enrolling
- Stored in wallet

4. Issuer verifies holder

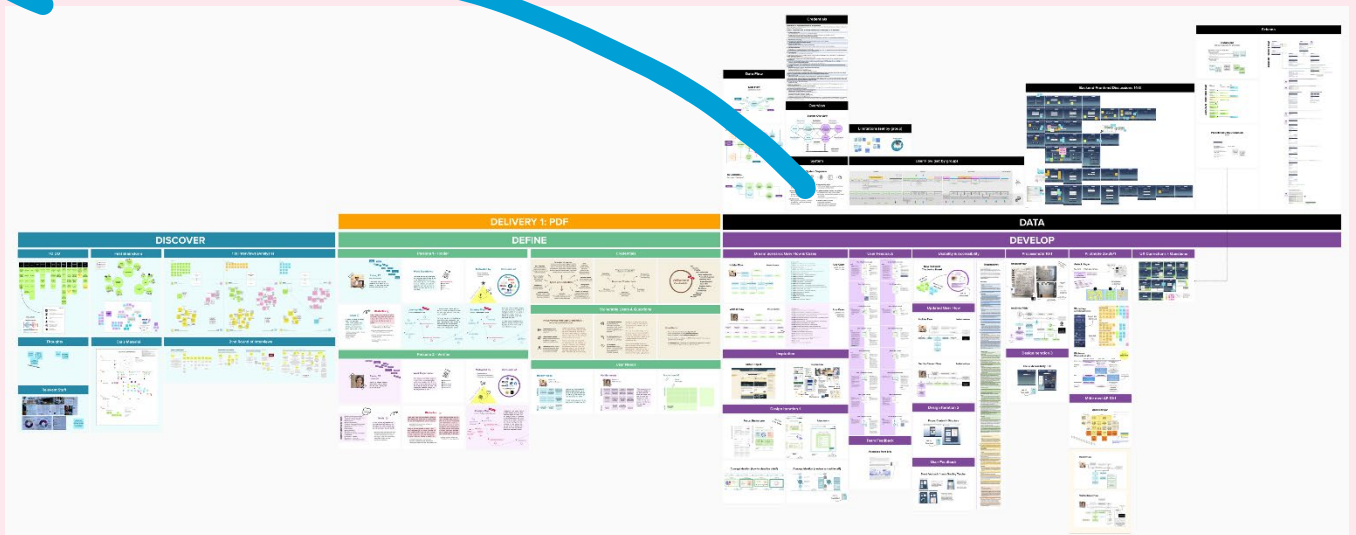
- With help of did (de-centralized identifiers)
- According to ISO-standard

5. Credential created, issued - and revoked

- Created through filling in data model
- Encrypted, but decryption possible by issuer and holder
- Possible to revoke by both parts

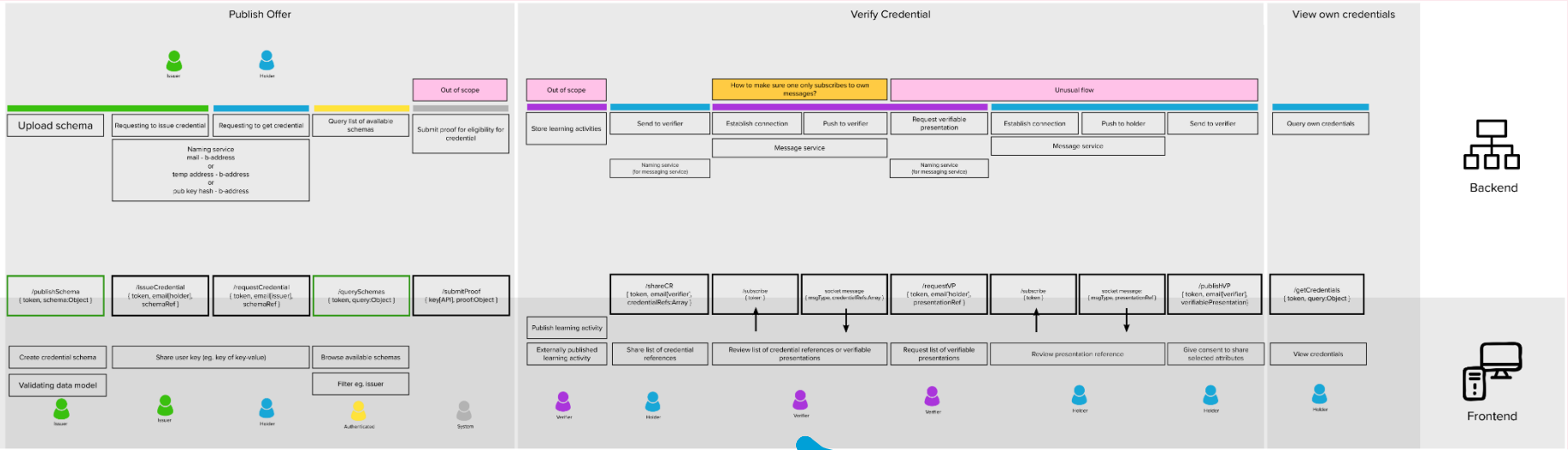
6. Verifier verifies credential

- yes-no has credential
- view entire (set of) credential(s)
- view selection of credential(s)



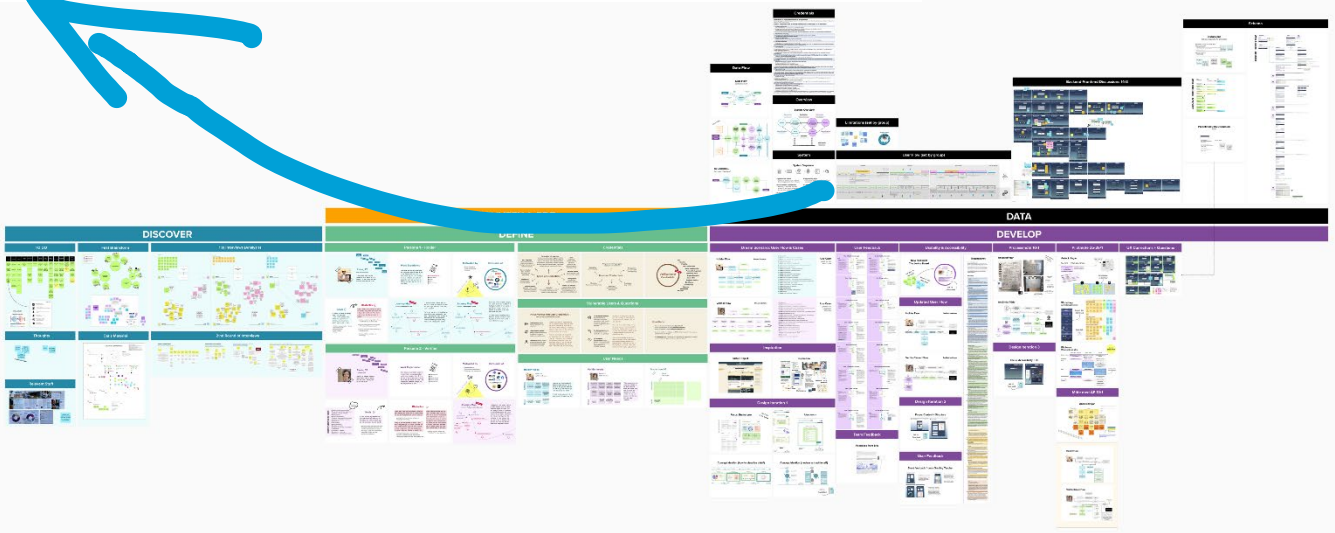
How will it work?

- small scale piloting with real people, needs and data



Adhering to standards for:

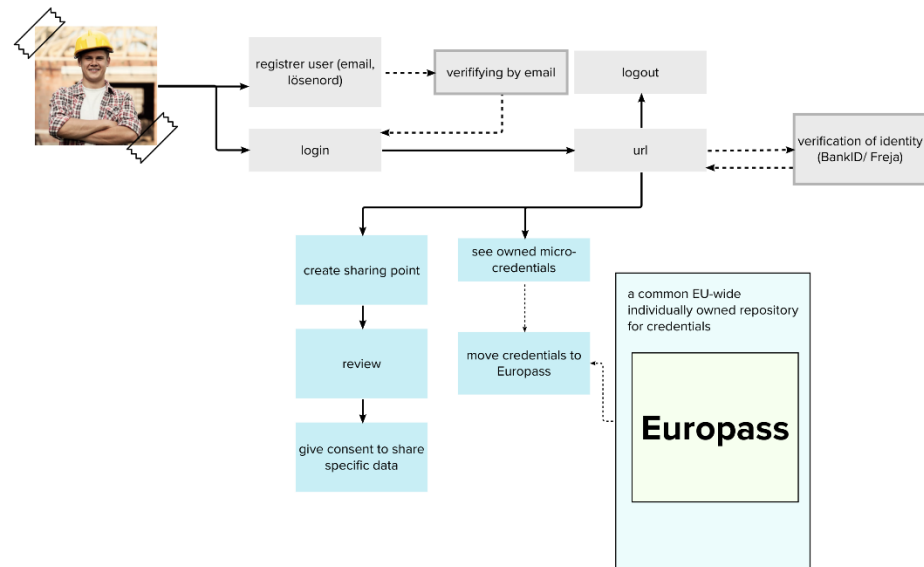
- Verifiable credentials
- Trust
- Security
- Integrity
- ELM v3



How will it work?

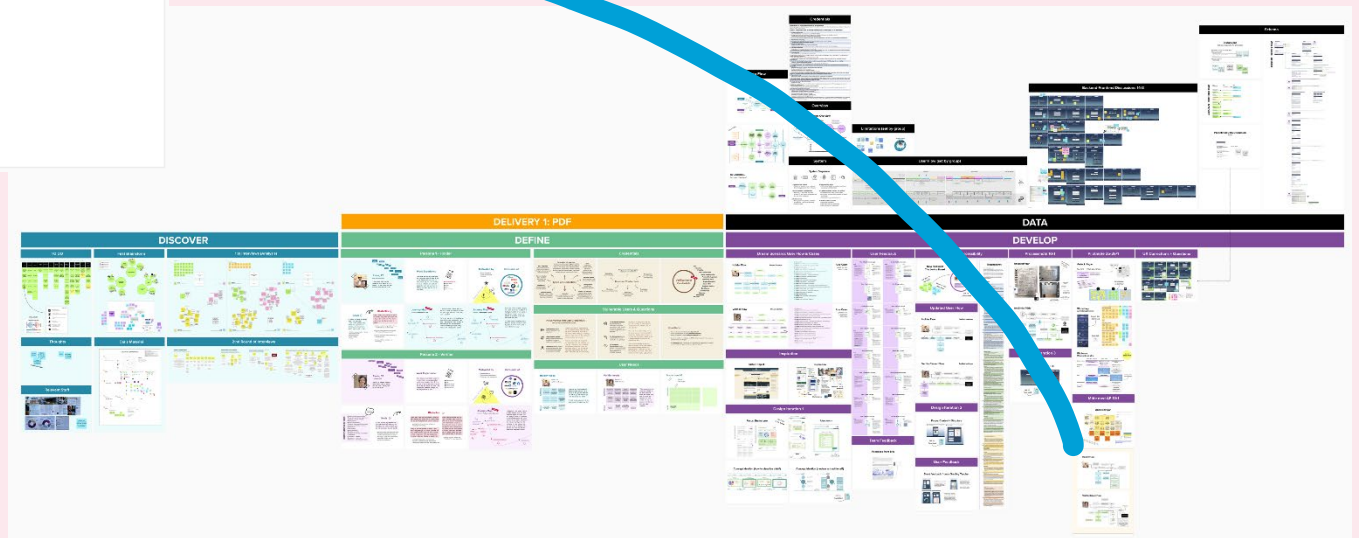
- small scale piloting with real people, needs and data

Holder Flow

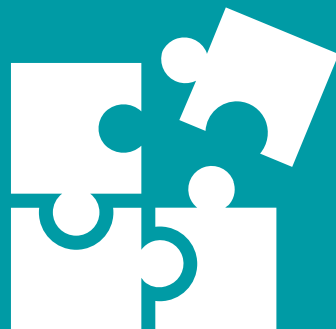


End result:

- Verified, issued and secured micro-credentials
- Owned by pilot participant
- Verifiable credential in EU-standard format
- Available and shareable through Europass



www.kompetenspasset.se/en/



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