

A European approach to micro-credentials

Introduction

EASPD is the European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities. We aim to promote equal opportunities for persons with disabilities through effective and high-quality service systems across Europe, in line with the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. EASPD is a European not-for-profit organization representing over 20,000 service providers in 34 European countries, registered at the Transparency Register under the following number: 120906010805-50. Our members are active in a wide range of activities, especially in care and support services, employment, education and training, and early childhood intervention. It is based on this expertise and know-how that we put forth our recommendations for an inclusive European approach to micro-credentials.

Context

Linked to the [European Skills Agenda](#) & [EU Education Area](#), the European Commission's ad-hoc consultation group on **micro-credentials have recently launched a [report](#)**, including a roadmap which focuses on some potential actions around micro-credentials; such as developing common European standards for quality and transparency, developing a list of trusted providers and fostering quality assurance processes, working on guidelines for a quicker recognition process, facilitating showcasing of micro-credentials to employers, improving access to lifelong learning opportunities, providing EU support through Erasmus+, ESF+ & other EU funds. In this context EASPD is responding to the consultation on the **Council Recommendation on micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability**.

The EU and all its Member States are parties of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD), and thus they shall ensure an inclusive education system and lifelong learning. Access to education and training is key for opening-up employment opportunities and social inclusion, where persons with disabilities are still lagging behind. In the EU 50.6% of persons with disabilities are employed compared to 74.8% of persons without disabilities, and the [unemployment rate of persons with disabilities](#) aged 20-64 in the EU, is 17.1% (10.2% for persons without disabilities). The [Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030](#) highlights that 20.3% of young persons with disabilities are early school leavers compared to 9.8% without disabilities and only 29.4% of persons with disabilities attain a tertiary degree (43.8% of those without disabilities).

Access to short training recognised through micro-credentials could make a difference in the inclusion of persons with disabilities in education and employment. Micro-credentials are flexible, short-term, and open to all types of learners, and, if accessible, could give access to training and formal recognition of skills to persons with disabilities according to their needs.

An EU system for micro-credentials could support the inclusion of persons with disabilities in society by also targeting workers in the social support sector. Implementing the UN CRPD entails a paradigm shift from a medical to a social, human-rights based, empowering and person-centred model of support, key element

in the transition from institutional to community-based care, and for the quality of life of persons with disabilities. Innovation in the way social support is designed and provided, can happen through training to workers in social support sector, and to education, health, and public administration. The quality and availability of training can make a difference in the pace and quality of this transition.

Recommendations from EASPD

It is based on this context, and the significant potential of micro-credentials to support social inclusion, that we recommend the European Institutions to take the following steps regarding a European approach to micro-credentials.

1. Make inclusion of persons with disabilities a key target for micro-credentials.

- a. Access to training for persons with disabilities can foster development of their personality, their talents and creativity, as well as their mental and physical abilities and their effective participation in society.
- b. Persons with disabilities and services supporting them could formally validate the skills acquired informally and throughout employment, as too often persons with disabilities' acquired skills remain unrecognised.
- c. Persons with disabilities could explore trainings in different fields, according to their interests and abilities in view of increasing their employment opportunities.

2. Ensure the accessibility of existing platforms and contents by making accessibility a cross-cutting request for micro credentials.

- a. According to the [UN CRPD article 24](#) States Parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others. To this end, States Parties shall ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided to persons with disabilities.
- b. Provide appropriate training to professional and staff who provide trainings. This training shall incorporate disability awareness and the use of appropriate augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, educational techniques, and materials to support persons with disabilities.

3. Enable social service providers offering VET services, sheltered workshops, supported employment to deliver micro credentials to persons with disabilities.

- a. Many service providers are already delivering trainings to people with disabilities, or skills that could be certified and included in the CV of persons with disabilities to higher their chances for future employment. They thus should be entitled to provide micro-credential certifications.
- b. Being part of an EU common system could be beneficial, as it might increase opportunities for persons with disabilities and those supporting them in finding the right trainings.

4. Foster the use of micro-credentials for re-skilling and upskilling social services workforce.

- a. An EU system of micro-credentials can be an important vehicle for the reskilling and upskilling of the social services workforce – [5% of total EU workforce](#) - and for creating EU-wide training opportunities on person-centred support, human rights, and deinstitutionalisation.
- b. Civil society and social service providers could be involved in identifying training needs and areas for training development.
- c. Instruments like the [European Care Certificate](#) covering the basic knowledge which is required for an individual to work in a health and social care setting should have the possibility to be entered in the EU micro-credentials system.

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