MyCred4Home

Guidelines for micro-credentials within the PHS sector

Result 4

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Guidelines for micro-credentials within the PHS sector (MyCred4Home Result 4)

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GRAPHIC AND LAYOUT

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Table of contents

INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose of the guide

This guide is the result of the work of Mycred4home partnership, Project Result 4. It is designed as a comprehensive resource for stakeholders involved in the Personal and Household Services (PHS) sector, including educators, training providers, employers, and policymakers. Its primary aim is to provide a single, easy-to-use guidance document to support the exploitation of the overall results of the MyCred4Home project. By implementing micro-credentials effectively, this guide seeks to enhance professional development and recognition of skills within the PHS sector, thereby improving employability and career progression opportunities for individuals, particularly those with low qualifications. This guide also offers an overview of the implementation of micro-credentials serving as an example for other sectors.

B. Overview of the MyCred4Home project

The MyCred4Home project, funded under the Erasmus+ program Cooperation partnerships in Adult Education, intends to promote social and professional inclusion for low qualified profiles by combining two EU tools: micro-credentials and the validation of non-formal and informal learning. The initiative aims to address the gap between existing qualification frameworks and the rapidly evolving demands of the labour market, particularly in sectors characterized by a high degree of informal learning and non-standard employment paths. The project brings together five partners from four European countries: IPERIA (France), STEPS (Italy), GDOCE (Spain), the University of Cyprus (Cyprus), and the Centre Familial de Bruxelles (Belgium).

The project has **four key objectives**:
- Identifying existing initiatives on micro-credentials for low-qualified profiles and providing information on legislation as regards VNIL and PHS sector in the partners countries.
- Designing new standards combining micro-credentials and VNIL adapted to the PHS sector.
- Provide evidence-based information on the potential of micro-credentials and VNIL for the PHS sector.
- Recommendations on the implementation of micro-credentials via validation of non-formal and informal learning for low qualified profiles.

Project Results
- Benchmarking Report
- Guide of standards of micro-credentials
- Innovative platform exploring new approaches to implement micro-credentials through VNIL
- Practical Guide

Through these activities, the MyCred4Home project endeavours to create a sustainable and

impactful change, enhancing the skill sets of individuals and thereby supporting the overall growth and professionalization of the sector.

C. Scope of this guide

The guide aims to collect the insights and experiences from the MyCred4Home project into actionable strategies and recommendations for stakeholders interested in developing, implementing, or advocating for micro-credentials. It serves as a blueprint for:

- Understanding the strategic importance of **micro-credentials**.
- Navigating the complexities of designing and implementing these credentials in a way that is both effective and aligned with existing qualifications.
- Leveraging micro-credentials to foster a culture of continuous professional development and lifelong learning.

By aligning the project's findings with practical, step-by-step guidance, we aim to facilitate the adoption of micro-credentials, ensuring they contribute positively to the career paths of individuals within the PHS sector and beyond.

1. Understanding micro-credentials

A. Background on micro-credentials

Micro-credentials are defined by the EU as formal recognitions of specific learning outcomes obtained through short, targeted learning experiences. These compact certifications validate an individual's competence in particular skill areas and play a critical role in workforce development. They facilitate career mobility and enhance employability across various sectors, including Personal and Household Services (PHS). In this field, where traditional educational pathways may not encompass the full range of required skills, micro-credentials are essential for recognizing both formal and informal learning experiences.

Micro-credentials are characterized by the following elements:

- **Flexibility:** Designed to address specific workforce needs, micro-credentials allow for personalized learning paths that effectively tackle immediate skill gaps.
- **Specificity:** Each micro-credential focuses on a distinct set of skills or knowledge, making it easier to align learning with job requirements.
- **Relevance:** Developed in response to actual industry demands, these credentials ensure that the skills they certify are directly applicable and valued in the workplace.
- **Assessment rigor:** Micro-credentials are awarded based on the successful demonstration of competencies through robust and reliable assessment methodologies.
- **Recognition:** Typically issued as digital badges or certificates, micro-credentials are recognized and valued by employers across sectors, thereby enhancing professional mobility.

B. Relevance and benefits in the PHS Sector

Micro-credentials transform the landscape of professional development within the PHS sector by:

- **Recognizing diverse skill sets:** They validate a wide range of competencies, from technical skills specific to the personal and household services sector to soft skills.
- **Supporting lifelong learning:** Micro-credentials facilitate continuous professional development, encouraging workers to acquire new skills as market demands evolve.
- **Enhancing career progression:** Micro-credentials offer clear pathways for career advancement in the PHS sector, which has historically struggled with professionalization. By formally recognizing skills and competencies, they have the potential to elevate the standards of the workforce, leading to improved job stability and increased earning potential for workers in this often undervalued field.
- **Increasing sector attractiveness:** By formalizing skills and competencies, micro-credentials help professionalize the sector, making it more attractive to potential workers.

C. Policy context and European frameworks

The development and recognition of micro-credentials are supported by several European initiatives:

- **European Qualifications Framework (EQF):** This framework aids in comparing qualifications across Europe, enhancing the transparency and portability of micro-credentials.
- **Council recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning:** this policy promotes the systematic recognition of non-formal and informal learning, integrating such experiences into formal qualification pathways.
- **European skills agenda:** Aims to ensure that micro-credentials are integrated into lifelong learning strategies, supporting upskilling and reskilling in response to digital and green transitions.

D. MyCred4Home research findings on the use of micro-credentials in validation of non-formal and informal learning

Conducting a benchmarking exercise is pivotal for identifying existing gaps, best practices, and challenges in current systems, leading to more effective and relevant solutions tailored to each country's needs. The first project result, **the benchmarking report**, provides a comprehensive overview of the current state of validation and certification for small volumes of learning outcomes in the partner countries involved in the project: France, Italy, Spain, Cyprus, and Belgium. This report examines the presence and implementation of micro-credentials in these countries, revealing significant insights into their application and impact within the PHS sector across Europe.

Key findings from the **MyCred4Home** project include:

- **Implementation successes**: Case studies from partner countries, such as France and Italy, illustrate successful models of micro-credential programs that have been tailored to meet specific sector needs, enhancing worker qualifications and meeting employer demands. The research identified effective practices related to the validation of non-formal and informal learning, showcasing innovative approaches in the PHS sector.
- **Impact on employability**: Research findings indicate that micro-credentials have markedly improved employability by providing recognized and portable proof of specific skills. Interviews conducted with six key stakeholders across the partner countries further emphasized how micro-credentials facilitate career progression and recognition of prior learning, thereby boosting individuals' confidence and employability prospects.
- **Challenges and opportunities**: The research also highlights various challenges, such as the need for greater awareness and standardization across EU member states. Interviews revealed that stakeholders perceive a significant gap in understanding micro-credentials, which hinders their broader acceptance. The report proposes strategic recommendations to overcome these hurdles, including developing clear communication strategies and establishing standardized frameworks for recognition and portability.

2. Designing micro-credentials

We recently observed that benchmarking reports are instrumental in identifying gaps within current validation and certification processes for micro-credentials, providing key insights into what exists and what is lacking in the sector. Building on these findings, the next step involves several essential stages in designing effective micro-credentials. The process begins by establishing a solid framework that defines the relevant sector, target group, and associated profession. With this foundation in place, the focus shifts to identifying and developing the critical skills needed for the workforce while assessing the added value of the micro-credential. Finally, careful consideration is given to the methods of evaluating and validating the micro-credential to ensure its effectiveness and relevance within the sector.

A. Identifying relevant skills and competencies

Designing micro-credentials involves a thorough identification of the skills and competencies that are most relevant and in-demand within the sector. This process should engage various stakeholders, including industry experts, employers, workers, and training providers, to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the sector's needs. Through consultations with industry experts and analysis of sector trends detailed key skills must be identified as crucial for the sector.

In the Mycred4Home project, key skills crucial for the Personal and Household Services (PHS) workforce were identified through extensive consultations with 49 stakeholders, including experts in certification, employers, and workers. The insights gained from these focus groups and interviews, further elaborated in Project Results 2, led to the identification of four essential skills necessary for the PHS sector:

1. **Micro-competence 1 – technical skill.** Carry out cleaning operations by integrating a professional quality approach.
2. **Micro-competence 2 - soft skill.** To be Organised/Efficient.
3. **Micro-competence 3 - basic skill.** Understand orally in the language used on a daily basis by the employer.
4. **Micro-competence 4 - transversal skill.** Respect the instructions, needs and expectations of the employer.

These identified micro-competences are the basis for the Mycred4Home micro-credentials system, which aims to cover a broad spectrum of roles within the PHS sector across partner countries and Europe. Rather than concentrating on a single profession, the system is designed to offer a comprehensive set of micro-credentials applicable to multiple professions within the PHS sector.

B. Structuring micro-credentials

Micro-credentials should be structured in a way that allows for flexibility and progression. Organizing these credentials into **units** helps create pathways that can lead to more comprehensive qualifications or stand alone for specific competencies. Drawing on PR2, which elaborates on the competency frameworks developed, the MyCred4Home project emphasizes the use of units that reflect real-world job roles and career pathways within the Personal and Household Services (PHS) sector.

Each unit is designed to focus on developing a specific micro-competence that is:

- **Targeted to a specific set of skills directly linked to job tasks**: This allows users to concentrate on learning areas that are most relevant to their immediate needs or career goals.
- **Stackable**: By dividing learning outcomes into small units, micro-credentials enable individuals to build upon their previous learning with additional skills or updated competencies. This approach reflects career advancement or changes within the sector, allowing for continuous professional development.

C. Developing micro-credential standards

To ensure credibility and recognition of micro-credentials, we recommend the development of robust standards that guide their creation and implementation. These standards should address:

- **Learning outcomes:** Clearly defined and measurable outcomes that specify what learners

are expected to know, do, and understand after completing the micro-credential.

- **Quality assurance:** standards to ensure that the teaching, learning materials, and assessment methods meet high-quality benchmarks.
- **Alignment with national and European frameworks:** Ensuring that micro-credentials are compatible with existing qualification frameworks to facilitate recognition and transferability.

Under Project Result 2, the MyCred4Home partners developed a competency framework that presents the essential skills and competencies directly relevant to the PHS sector. The skills repository outlines the learning outcomes for each competence, serving as success indicators for obtaining micro-credentials and defining the learning objectives.

The framework has been established at Level 2 of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). A detailed overview of the comprehensive competency framework can be found in Project Result 2.

C. Designing assessment and validation methods

Designing assessment and validation methods involves creating systematic approaches to evaluate and verify the knowledge, skills, and competencies of individuals. This process is crucial to ensure that learners or professionals meet specific standards and qualifications.

Assessment methods for micro-credentials must be valid, reliable, and aligned with the defined learning outcomes. Effective assessment strategies include:

- **Practical demonstrations:** Where learners show their ability to perform specific tasks or procedures.
- **Simulations:** Offering scenarios that mirror real-world challenges, allowing assessors to evaluate how well candidates apply their knowledge and skills in practical contexts.
- **Peer reviews and self-assessments:** Encouraging reflective practice and continuous learning.

Developing and implementing these elements in micro-credentials design will ensure that they are both effective in fostering skill acquisition and valued as credible forms of certification within the sector. This approach not only benefits the individual learner by providing clear, targeted educational opportunities but also supports the sector's broader goals of professionalization and quality improvement.

In the Mycred4Home project partners developed evaluations that simulate interactive professional scenarios for each micro-competence. These evaluations are designed to align with the competency framework's expected learning outcomes. The assessments include scenarios of real work environments, where candidates must make decisions based on the given context. The four scenarios are integrated into an online platform.

A scoring system was also proposed by the partners for all 4 micro-competences. To earn a micro-credentials, candidates must achieve a score of at least 60% correct answers. A score above 60% indicates that the micro-competence has been acquired, and the candidate is awarded a badge. A score below 60% means the candidate has not validated the competence and will not receive a badge.

For candidates who meet the minimum passing criteria, three levels of proficiency are available for each micro-competence:

- Beginner Level
- Intermediate Level
- Expert Level

The aim is to provide meaningful and relevant badges for both future candidates seeking micro-credentials and employers looking to recognize certified professionals.

3. MyCred4Home tools for the implementation of micro-credentials

This chapter provides an in-depth exploration of the tools and methodologies employed in the MyCred4Home project to effectively implement, evaluate, and validate micro-credentials within the Personal and Household Services (PHS) sector. This integrated approach combines a digital platform, tailored feedback mechanisms, and a digital badge system to create a comprehensive and user-friendly experience both for candidates and evaluators.

A. Presentation of tools for implementation

1. Digital platform for assessments and feedback

At the core of the MyCred4Home project is a user-friendly **digital platform** designed to host all assessments and resources necessary for implementing micro-credentials. The platform serves multiple functions:

- **Assessment delivery**: Hosts interactive assessments for each micro-competence, allowing candidates to engage with realistic professional scenarios that mirror real-life situations in the PHS sector.

- **User-Friendly interface**: Intuitive navigation and accessible design ensure that users with varying levels of digital literacy can easily interact with the platform.

- **Resource hub**: Provides access to guides, instructional materials, and support resources for both candidates and evaluators.

Accessing the platform:

- The platform is accessible online, providing flexibility for candidates to complete assessments at their own pace and convenience.

- Secure login credentials ensure privacy and integrity of the assessment process.

2. Tailored feedback for candidates on micro-competences

A key feature of the MyCred4Home approach is the provision of **tailored feedback** to candidates on their performance in each micro-competence. This personalized feedback mechanism enhances the learning experience by:

- **Immediate automated feedback**:

  - For **Micro-competence 2 (Organizational Skills)** and **Micro-competence 3 (Language Skills)**, the platform generates instant feedback upon completion of the assessments.

  - Candidates receive detailed insights into their performance, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement.

- **Personalized evaluator feedback**:

  - For **Micro-competence 1 (Technical Skill)** and **Micro-competence 4 (Transversal Skill)**, evaluators provide direct, personalized feedback after reviewing the candidates' performance.

  - This feedback is based on specific criteria aligned with the learning objectives and includes practical recommendations for further development.

- **Supportive learning environment**:

  - The feedback is framed constructively to encourage continuous learning and professional growth.

  - Candidates feel supported and motivated to enhance their competencies.

3. Digital badge system for recognition

To acknowledge and certify the achievements of candidates, the MyCred4Home project utilizes a **Digital badge system**. This system serves as a modern and accessible way to recognize and share micro-credentials:

- **Issuance of digital badges**:

  - Upon successful completion of a micro-competence assessment with a score of at least 60%, candidates are awarded a digital badge.

- o The badges represent the level of proficiency achieved: **Beginner**, **Intermediate**, or **Expert**.

- **Features of digital badges**:

  - o **Verifiable**: Each badge contains metadata that verifies the issuer (MyCred4Home project), the recipient, the date of issuance, and the competencies achieved.

  - o **Portable**: Candidates can share their badges across various platforms, including professional networking sites like LinkedIn, personal portfolios, or with potential employers.

  - o **Recognized by employers**: The badges are designed to be recognized and valued within the PHS sector, enhancing employability and professional credibility.

- **Integration with the platform**:

  - o The digital badge system is seamlessly integrated into the platform, allowing for automatic issuance and management of badges.

  - o Candidates can access their badges through their user profiles and are provided with guidance on how to share and display them.

B. Results of the implementation

The combined use of these tools was tested during the pilot phase of the MyCred4Home project, providing valuable insights into their effectiveness and impact on candidates' learning experiences and professional development.

1. Pilot phase insights

The pilot phase in Spain and France demonstrated the practical application and benefits of integrating the digital platform, tailored feedback, and digital badge system:

- **Enhanced user experience**:

  - o Candidates reported high levels of satisfaction with the platform's ease of use and the clarity of assessments.

  - o The immediate and personalized feedback was appreciated, as it helped them understand their performance and identify specific areas for improvement.

- **Effective skill recognition**:

  - o The realistic assessments allowed candidates to demonstrate their competencies in contexts relevant to their professional roles.

  - o The tailored feedback reinforced their learning and encouraged self-reflection.

- **Motivation and engagement**:
  - Receiving digital badges upon successful completion provided a sense of achievement and motivated candidates to pursue additional micro-credentials.
  - The ability to share badges increased their engagement and interest in further professional development.

2. **Impact of the assessment**

On learners:

- **Confidence building**: The combination of supportive feedback and tangible recognition through digital badges boosted candidates' confidence in their professional abilities.

- **Professional growth**: Candidates felt empowered to set personal development goals and were motivated to engage in lifelong learning.

- **Enhanced employability**: The micro-credentials obtained were perceived as valuable assets in the job market, potentially leading to better employment opportunities within the PHS sector.

On the PHS sector:

- **Standardization of skills**: The tools contributed to a more standardized recognition of skills and competencies, facilitating better matching between employers' needs and workers' abilities.

- **Sector attractiveness**: The modern approach to certification and recognition may attract more individuals to the PHS sector, addressing labor shortages and professionalization challenges.

C. **Recommendations for future implementations**

Based on the pilot results, the following recommendations aim to enhance the effectiveness and user experience of the MyCred4Home tools:

1. **Enhance clarity of instructions**:
   - Review and refine assessment instructions to eliminate any confusion.
   - Include examples or tutorials within the platform to guide candidates through the assessment process.

2. **Strengthen evaluator training**:
   - Encourage best practice sharing among evaluators to enhance the quality of personalized feedback.

3. **Promote digital badge awareness**:

- Educate candidates and employers on the value and use of digital badges to maximize their impact.

- Develop partnerships with industry organizations to increase recognition and acceptance of the badges.

4. **Continuous technical improvements**:

- Regularly update the platform to improve functionality and address any technical issues promptly.

- Incorporate user feedback mechanisms within the platform to identify areas for enhancement.

5. **Expand support resources**:

- Provide additional support materials, such as FAQs, user guides, and helpdesk support, to assist candidates throughout their learning journey.

D. Conclusion of the experimentation of micro-credentials

The integrated use of a digital platform, tailored feedback mechanisms, and a digital badge system in the MyCred4Home project has proven to be an effective approach for implementing micro-credentials in the PHS sector. These tools work synergistically to provide a comprehensive, user-friendly, and motivating experience for candidates, ultimately contributing to their professional development and the sector's growth.

By continuing to refine these tools and addressing the recommendations from the pilot phase, the MyCred4Home project can further enhance its impact. This holistic approach serves as a model for other sectors looking to adopt micro-credentials, demonstrating the potential of combining technology, personalized learning, and modern recognition systems to support lifelong learning and employability.

4. General conclusion & step-by-step process

This chapter summarizes the key points discussed throughout the guide and provides a consolidated step-by-step process for implementing micro-credentials in the Personal and Household Services (PHS) sector, along with final advice and recommendations to ensure effective application and sustainability.

A. Summary of key points and step-by-step process
Key points:

- **Micro-credentials' role and value:** Micro-credentials offer a flexible, targeted approach to professional development, particularly valuable in the PHS sector where traditional educational pathways may not fully capture the diversity of skills and competencies needed.

- **Digital tools and platforms:** The implementation of micro-credentials relies heavily on digital platforms for issuing, storing, and sharing credentials securely and efficiently.

- **Integration and recognition:** Successful integration of micro-credentials into existing educational and professional systems enhances their value and recognition, making them a powerful tool for career development.

B. Step-by-step process:

1. **Identify the needed skills and competencies:** Referencing the competency framework developed in PR2, identify which skills are most valuable and relevant for the PHS sector.

2. **Develop and design micro-credentials:** Using the insights from PR1, create micro-credentials that reflect identified skills and competencies, ensuring they are measurable and verifiable.

3. **Implement digital issuance and storage solutions:** Set up secure and efficient systems for issuing and storing credentials, utilizing blockchain technology or secure cloud storage as appropriate.

4. **Align with standards and frameworks:** Ensure that all micro-credentials align with existing educational frameworks, such as the EQF, to guarantee their recognition across borders.

5. **Launch a pilot program:** Before full-scale implementation, conduct a pilot program to test the micro-credentials system within a controlled environment, allowing for adjustments based on feedback.

6. **Evaluate and adapt:** Continuously monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the micro-credentials program and make necessary adjustments based on stakeholder feedback and changing industry demands.

C. Advice and recommendations

- **Stakeholder engagement:** Engage all relevant stakeholders, including educators, employers, policymakers, and learners, from the early stages of designing micro-credentials to ensure their needs and expectations are met.

- **Continuous learning and adaptation:** Embrace a philosophy of continuous improvement and learning. Micro-credentials should be regularly reviewed and updated to remain relevant as job roles and industry requirements evolve.

- **Promote awareness and understanding:** Conduct awareness campaigns to educate stakeholders on the value and utility of micro-credentials. Clear communication about their benefits can facilitate wider acceptance and integration.

- **Leverage technology:** Utilize the latest technological advances for the administration of micro-credentials. This includes leveraging data analytics for improved decision-making and using digital platforms for enhanced user experience.

- **Policy advocacy:** Work with government bodies and accreditation agencies to advocate for policies that recognize and regulate micro-credentials as legitimate and valuable learning and development tools.

- **Global benchmarking:** Compare and contrast the micro-credentialing approach with global best practices to ensure the system is competitive and meets international standards.

5. References & resources

This section provides a comprehensive list of the resources, studies, and documents referenced throughout this guide, offering further reading and background materials to deepen understanding of the topics discussed.

A. Key documents and resources
1. European Commission documents:

- European Skills Agenda

- Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning

- Proposal for a Council Recommendation on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability

2. MyCred4Home project deliverables:

- MyCred4Home PR1 Benchmarking Report

- MyCred4Home PR2 Competence Framework

3. European Qualifications Framework (EQF):

- EQF Portal

4. Relevant legislation and policy documents:

- Organic Law 3/2022 on the organisation and integration of Vocational Training in Spain

- Order TMS/283/2019 regulating the Catalogue of Training Specialities in Spain

5. **Technological and educational platforms:**

- Europass Digital Credentials

- European Digital Credentials for Learning

- Open Badges

- IMS Global Learning Consortium

B. **Further reading and tools**

1. **CEDEFOP Resources:**

   o CEDEFOP's work on micro-credentials

   o Mapping out ways to implement micro-credentials

2. **Educational Technology Insights:**

   o SpringerOpen articles on educational technology and micro-credentialing

   o Class Central MOOC Report

3. **Professional Development and Vocational Training Articles:**

   o Articles and case studies from the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound)

   o Insights from the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP)

4. **Additional Online Platforms and Tools:**

   o Edubadges

   o Open Badges Platform

This list of references and resources provides a foundation for those interested in further exploring the development and implementation of micro-credentials within the PHS sector and beyond. It offers a blend of theoretical background, practical insights, and direct links to key documents that will aid in the effective utilization of micro-credentials as part of ongoing professional development and lifelong learning strategies.

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MyCred4Home

Developing Micro Credentials for the Home Care Sector

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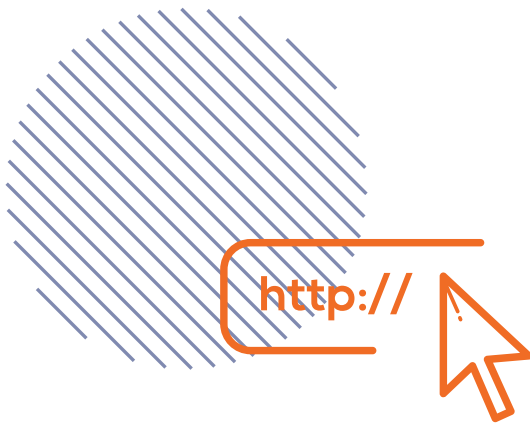
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