DELIVERABLE 3.6

Template Development (including assessment criteria)

WP3 – Common Understanding

WP LEADER: BIBB

About BEM

The Erasmus+ project "Beyond Europe with Micro-credentials" (BEM project) is about transferring experiences from ECVET to the development of micro-credentials. The aim is to reflect these in the non-EU member states and adapt them to the respective local conditions.

With micro-credentials (MC), labour market-relevant qualifications are developed whose contents are derived from the needs of selected sectors in the countries and implemented in consultation with regional companies. MCs also focus on groups of people who have so far been insufficiently covered by the education systems (e.g. learners in structurally weak regions, single parents, unskilled workers, people with support needs, refugees). BEM MCs can be used in vocational education and training (VET), as an additional qualification or for the validation and recognition of informal learning. It is planned to develop 10 to 12 MCs per country. The developed MCs will be linked to the Europass templates and included in the multilingual "Skillsbank" maintained in Norway. This will give them an additional European added value, and they can be transferred to other countries or sectors.

The BEM project brings together VET institutes, national qualifications authorities, intermediate institutions, and VET providers (vocational schools and training centers) from eight countries. This broad project partnership enables the accreditation, documentation, recognition, or validation of MCs according to the conditions applicable in each country, thus building a bridge between education (VET and higher education) and the world of work.

Introduction

BEM Micro Credentials have their methodological origins in ECVET. ECVET stands for European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training. It is a European tool that was meant as a framework that allows the recognition and transfer of learning outcomes across different countries, systems, and institutions. ECVET was presented to the member states in a Council recommendation in 2008. From 2009, it was piloted and tested in several Erasmus+ projects, both as an instrument to promote mobility and to improve permeability and credit transfer. Although the ECVET's objectives regarding credit transfer have not been realised across Europe, we consider some of its core principles to be very useful for describing micro-credentials. We elaborate on this below and conclude by summarizing our ideas in a proposal for a template to describe BEM micro-credentials.

The structural model for a template of a BEM Micro-Credential: an ECVET unit of learning outcomes

ECVET units of learning can serve as a very appropriate way to designing micro-credentials. They were originally intended to enhance the mobility and employability of learners and workers in the European Union by describing and documenting what a learner has achieved during a mobility period or a qualification process. This description is based on learning outcomes expressed in terms of knowledge, skills and competences. They are defined by the expected standards of performance, not by inputs or methods of learning or a didactic process.

Against this backdrop ECVET units of learning outcomes should enable the mobility of learners within the European Union, by making it easier to compare and validate their learning achievements in different contexts and at the same time for supporting

the development of flexible and individualized learning pathways, by allowing learners to accumulate and transfer units towards a qualification (the latter has proved to be very complicated against the background of the different VET systems in Europe).

An ECVET unit of learning outcomes is designed as a coherent set of knowledge, skills and competences that can be assessed and validated. They are not meant to be mandatory, but they can serve as a useful tool for designing and documenting learning outcomes in vocational education and training. They help to ensure that the learning outcomes are clear, relevant, and consistent across different contexts and providers. ECVET units of learning outcomes templates can also facilitate the recognition and validation of learning outcomes acquired in different settings, such as formal, non-formal and informal learning. To use a unit in practice, the following specifications must have been made in advance:

1. The unit of learning outcomes corresponding to the learning objectives and expected outcomes of the mobility period or qualification process must be defined and named.
2. Points/Credits must be allocated to each unit based on the workload and level of difficulty (especially if the unit is part of a full qualification or is to be used for permeability purposes).
3. In mobility contexts, agreements between the sending and receiving institutions or between the competent authorities must be established on how the units are to be assessed, validated, and recognised.
4. Transcripts of records with the learning outcomes and credit points achieved must be developed and it must be clarified who is authorised to issue them.

How ECVET units of learning outcomes templates are designed for different purposes are meanwhile documented by various sources, e.g

https://www.ecvet-toolkit.eu/

https://www.na-bibb.de/erasmus-berufsbildung/mobilitaet/lernergebnisse-und-qualitaet/lernergebniseinheiten-a-z

https://ecvetskillsplatform.eu/de/lernmaterialien/#

https://www.na-bibb.de/fileadmin/user_upload/na-bibb.de/Dokumente/02_Berufsbildung/01_Mobilitaet/08_ECVET/ECVET_Prinzipien/Lernergebniseinheiten_von_unterwegs_entwickeln.pdf

https://lernen.christiani-digital.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/170207_Leitfaden_zur_Formulierung_von_Lernergebniseinheiten.pdf

https://www.em-eu.eu/media/1343/ecvet-manual-for-emeu-final.pdf

If you click through the links, you will notice that unit of learning outcomes can be structured in different ways, depending on the needs and preferences of the stakeholders involved. However, there are some common elements that should be included in any ECVET unit of learning outcomes template:

A template for a unit of learning outcomes should cover the following information:

- a clear title that reflects its content
- a set of learning outcomes that describe what the learner is expected to know, understand and be able to do
- assessment criteria that specify the evidence required to demonstrate the achievement of the learning outcomes
- assessment methods that describe how the evidence will be collected and evaluated
- validation procedures that define how the assessment results will be documented and certified, validation procedures, quality assurance measures, relevant legislation, and regulations, etc.

Units that are designed for permeability purposes (for example in case of shifting between VET and HE or between training programmes in the same occupational field) or that are to be implemented in systems that are using accumulation and credit transfer mechanism also should contain

- a credit value that indicates its relative weight within the qualification
- a level that corresponds to the difficulty and autonomy of the described task and skill, if possible, aligned to one of the eight levels of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

The design principles of ECVET units of learning outcomes described above can improve the transparency and comparability of qualifications in Europe. The use of a common language (that of learning outcomes rather than qualifications and levels) and a common framework for the description of learning outcomes are proving to be important tools for bridging the gaps and differences between different national and sectoral systems and standards. We assume that these design principles should also form the basis for the description of BEM micro credentials.

The BEM approach to micro credentials: ECVET-inspired templates for the description of BEM micro credentials

Micro-credentials and ECVET units of learning outcomes serve similar purposes: They should contribute to lifelong learning and improve the mobility of learners and workers by making what has been learnt transparent and enabling it to be read and understood beyond the borders of the national education system.

While ECVET in its original form focused on the recognition and accumulation of learning outcomes and gradually developed into a very successful tool for the implementation of periods abroad in vocational education and training (mobility), micro-credentials have so far tended to focus on linking higher education and vocational education and training programmes and on meeting the emerging demand for skills below an apprenticeship or a full qualification in the short term. In fact, an ECVET unit of learning outcomes and a BEM Micro-Credential transport the same information: they are formats describing knowledge, skills and competences of a learner that can be assessed and validated.

Since 2020, several publications have been published by European institutions that support the design of micro-credentials by formulating ten principles to guide the process, among other things. Here, too, the similarities with ECVET units of learning outcomes are striking.

Micro-Credentials[1]

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[1] Sources:

(1) based on: A European approach to micro-credentials brochure. https://education.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2022-01/micro-credentials%20brochure%20updated.pdf.

(2) Micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability – recommendations. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=LEGISSUM:4617908.

(3) GUIDE TO DESIGN, ISSUE AND RECOGNISE MICRO-CREDENTIALS. https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-06/Micro-Credential%20Guidelines%20Final%20Delivery.pdf.

(4) Proposal for a Council Recommendation to the on a European approach to …. https://education.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2022-01/annex%202%20to%20the%20proposal%20on%20micro-credentials.pdf.

- should be designed as specific and focused learning outcomes that address relevant skills and competences needed in vocational/company contexts.
- should be quantifiable, comparable across contexts, and easily understood by learners, institutions, and employers.
- should be assessed against transparent criteria.
- Micro-credentials belong to learners, allowing them to share and use them flexibly. They can be stand-alone or combined into larger credentials.
- Micro-credentials should equip learners with practical skills.
- They can – but not necessarily have to - be integrated or stacked toward larger qualifications. This flexibility enhances learners' pathways and career progression.
- Clear guidance on designing and issuing micro-credentials is crucial. Institutions and providers should follow standardized principles to ensure consistency and trust.
- Common approaches at the EU level can enhance national efforts, making micro-credentials recognizable and valuable across borders.

In the case of ECVET each unit was to be assigned with a credit value (credit points) that reflects its relative weight within a qualification and based on the estimated workload that a learner needs to complete the unit. However, in many cases this has proven to be too complicated and not meaningful enough on the labour market[2] . For BEM micro-credentials, "scoring" makes sense if the Micro-Credential is part of a more comprehensive qualification and is to be used for credit transfer. However, this is not necessarily envisaged in the BEM, as the BEM Micro-Credentials are developed based on the current need of the regional

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[2] Aunziger, Monika; Luomi-Messerer, Karin (2021): The European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2021

companies and insofar primarily understood as stand-alone bridging skills to the labour market or as "add-on skills" that start after the formal educational qualifications.

The following requirements are placed on BEM-micro-credentials

- they should be relevant to the labour market.
- they should be geared to the current needs of one or more companies in the region and, where possible, be developed with or approved by company representatives.
- they should be aimed at target groups that are currently not or not sufficiently covered by the formal education system.
- they should be interchangeable and usable within the network of our BEM partner countries.
- they should be digitised, available as a "BEM badge" and linked to Europass.

The following questions must be clarified in advance to do justice to the national particularities of the project partnership and thus also to the different application and recognition contexts:

- Are the micro-credentials to be designed stackable (as a part of a bigger qualification) or as stand-alone skills? This might differ in our partner countries according to their national VET systems and strategies.
- Are there already cooperations to local/regional companies that are willing to accredit/recognise the credential as labour market relevant – at least on the level of the company? Is the company willing and ready to cooperate in the definition of the credential content (will they support workplace analysis)? Will the company be willing/ready to cooperate in the definition of assessment criteria? Is it possible to formalise the cooperation and sign a Memorandum of Understanding?

The BEM approach to Micro-credentials consist insofar of several steps

Step 1:   The analysis of the workplace (occupational activities bundled in the MC), i.e
   - Tying bonds with local/regional companies and convincing them for a cooperation (presenting the win-win)
   - Identifying the skills need of the company based on workplace observations and describing the job and tasks in which the necessary skills are embedded
   - Identifying work tasks (TPT) and routines that are characteristic/typical for the skills/the job

Step 2:   The identification of learning outcomes based on the occupational activities ("translating" the occupational activities into learning outcomes)

Step 3:   The clarification of all information related to the Micro-credential (assessment, duration, ...)

Step 4:   A template to describe the micro-credential by its Purpose/function, Branch/sector, Responsibility of the workplace of the Micro-credential holder, Typical work fields (EInsatzfelder), Typical work tasks and learning Outcomes.

The BEM micro-credential template

The BEM template
- records knowledge and skills (and competences?) relevant and derived from the needs of the labour market (from the demands of a company) below (smaller than) a full qualification
- describes these knowledge, skills and competences in terms of learning outcomes and
- presents all necessary framework information for the implementation of the micro-credential.

Against this background a BEM micro-credential can be understood as a kind of "degree" (not a programme) making the learning outcomes visible, enabling the individual to be competitive at the labour market by providing knowledge and skills that are currently not embedded in the formal VET provision ("add-on skills"). How the micro-credential is delivered, the training process, the training programme, the time is in the hands of the provider. Common assessments criteria prove that the LO are achieved regardless of how they are prepared.

On this basis, the template has two parts. It includes general information that must be filled in in a standardised way across national borders. This relates specifically to the formulation of the learning outcomes, which must be clearly understandable and SMART (more on this in deliverable 3.2). In addition, there is an open section in which information is included that relates to the target groups for a credential (which may differ depending on the country or sector) or to the question of credits, duration, NQF assignment, etc. (which therefore reflect the national specifics). Based on this understanding a BEM micro-credential can be offered at different locations (learning venues) and by different providers. It can refer to other Micro-credentials and build on them (be stackable), but does not necessarily have to. A BEM micro-credential can also stand alone. It is just a matter of the template description.

Important; A BEM micro-credential describes the results of a learning process, but not the learning process itself. Against this background a Micro-credential is neither an occupational standard, nor an educational one.

The BEM template

BEM content (for all parters)	Title/name of the credential	The name of the MC should be much specified and express the main content of the work field, occupation in a narrow way.		
	Function of the micro-credentials / purpose	MC should be designed on the needs of industry-specific skills, part of CPD, upskilling, reskilling, etc.		
	Possible target groups	Could be Individuals, workers, office staff, etc.		
	Branch/sector of application	Should be written the name of economy sector of the country, sub sector or separately standing production.		
	Fields of application / work environment	Should be written in what sector of production or public life this MC could be delivered.		
	Typical work/professional tasks	Should be written main job tasks that a person is going to perform after being awarded a MC		
	Learning outcomes (personal and job related)	Knowledge	Skills	competences
		Learning outcomes should be formulated in commonly accepted way, see the link:https://eurspace.eu/ecvet/pedagogicalkit/framework-for-defining-learning-outcomes-knowledge-skills-competence/		

		Can be used the formulation format of National Qualification Framework descriptors, adjusting and applying that format for relevant job.	
	Validation	Criteria	Procedures
		While writing the criteria and procedures of validation, should be taken to consideration the existing national regulations of prior learning outcomes, non-formal and informal education. *In case there are no regulations in the country, here should be written the description of specific criteria and procedures, which will be developed and accepted by all sides of partners who are involved in the MC procedures.*	
	Recognised/accepted (documented by MoU)	Name of companies *Should be written the name of company or companies with who has been signed a Memorandum of Understanding or an Agreement in the framework of developing MC. In some cases the Memorandum could include also the issue of training course delivery leading to MC.*	
	Provider(s)	*Providers could be from private or state sectors. It depends on who are main stakeholders.*	

Additional information (if needed)	Entry level / prerequisites	*It is not mandatory to fill this column*
		If needed, here could be written additional information about the individual's basic knowledge and skills or educational level, etc.
	Possible duration (target group specific) (recommendation)	*Also could be written the possible duration of the training course leading to MC.*
Specific content (national) (if needed)	Position in the chain of educational programmes	*It is not mandatory to fill this column.*
	Reference to NQF	*If needed, here could be written the information due to existing national legislation.*
	Credits	

A standardised approach to how the template is handled is the focus of work package 4 and is practiced in joint working sessions