

Micro-credentials and Verified Skills: Building a Trusted European Labour Market

Addressing skills gaps and recruitment challenges in Europe

Europe's labour market is experiencing increasingly acute skills gaps and labour shortages, particularly in high-demand sectors such as healthcare, engineering, IT, transportation, and education. According to the 2024 EURES report, nearly all European countries surveyed face shortage occupations, especially in these skilled professions, while concurrently having surplus supply in other roles (European Labour Authority, 2024a, 2024b). These mismatches are exacerbated by demographic change: low birth rates, ageing populations, and a shrinking working-age cohort are putting severe pressure on the supply of labour (European Commission, 2025a; Eurostat, 2025; Henley, 2025).

Traditional hiring practices and validation of paper credentials like degrees are increasingly unreliable. CVs are susceptible to fraud or exaggeration: a recent UK survey found that almost one in five job applicants admitted to lying on their applications, with employers reporting inflated degrees, altered employment dates, or fictitious responsibilities (Bowcott, 2025; theHRDirector, 2025). The rise of AI tools has made misrepresentation easier and fraud detection harder, especially among larger organisations that increasingly report encountering fraudulent or misleading credentials in applications (World Economic Forum, 2025).

Moreover, foreign degrees and qualifications are difficult to verify and validate across borders, arising from differences in educational systems, accreditation standards, and the presence of fake or unrecognised providers. Bodies such as ENIC-NARIC and the Council of Europe have flagged the growing risk of “diploma mills,” forged credentials, and unregulated institutions (ENIC-NARIC, 2025). Without robust recognition mechanisms, workers with genuine foreign credentials may be unfairly excluded or under-utilised, while recruiters and employers face risk and uncertainty.

In sum, the confluence of labour shortages, demographic strain, unreliable CVs, and the complexities of foreign qualification recognition together create a strong case: the current systems for assessing skills and credentials are not sufficient to meet Europe's evolving economic, societal, and mobility needs.

How micro-credentials and verified skills address the challenge

One way to strengthen labour market transparency and efficiency is by enriching traditional CVs with micro-credentials and verifiable skills data. Unlike self-reported qualifications, micro-credentials provide digitally certified, tamper-resistant evidence of specific learning outcomes, often issued by accredited institutions or professional bodies (World Economic Forum, 2025).

This approach enhances worker mobility across sectors and borders, as skills and competencies are recorded in a portable and standardised format that employers can trust (Randstad, 2025; Yacht, 2025). At the same time, it mitigates the problem of CV fraud by embedding secure digital certificates directly into recruitment processes (ENIC-NARIC, 2025).

By shifting emphasis from self-appraised qualifications to verifiable records, micro-credentials and certified skills enable employers to make more reliable hiring decisions, while empowering workers to showcase validated abilities that align with evolving labour market demands (Assess Candidates, 2025).

What we are going to build

We will operationalise the EU policy bridge between DG EAC's European approach to micro-credentials and DG EMPL's Union of Skills agenda by delivering a coherent, implementation-ready stack covering policy, governance, data and systems. Concretely, we will:

- Align with EU policy: Apply the *Council Recommendation on a European approach to micro-credentials* (2022/C 243/02) and the Commission's 2025 *Union of Skills* priorities on transparency, portability, and labour-market relevance (European Council, 2022; European Commission, 2025b).
- Publish governance artefacts: eIDAS Rulebook for Education v1.5 (building on the work of DC4EU) and a Rulebook for Verified Skills v1.0, specifying roles, assurance levels, issuance and verification flows, and conformity.
- Design a metadata schema: Verified Skills v1.0, derived from the micro-credentials schema and mapped to relevant initiatives like the European Learning Model (ELM) and ESCO.
- Provide implementation recommendations: Guidelines for local deployment including use of ESCO-linked skills, QA principles and suitable technology that ensures tamper-evident and machine-verifiable credentials across borders.

Together, these deliverables connect European policy intent (DG EAC; DG EMPL) with a practical, standards-based pathway for issuers and relying parties, improving cross-border mobility while reducing credential fraud through trustworthy and portable micro-credentials and certified skills.

European CHRO engagement

The success of micro-credentials and verified skills depends not only on technical standards but in particular on broad stakeholder engagement and institutional support. First, we must secure active participation of Chief Human Resource Officers (CHROs) and professional skills assessors in Member States. As gatekeepers of recruitment and workforce development, they are essential in embedding micro-credentials and verified skills into hiring practices, thereby increasing uptake and ensuring portability across sectors (World Economic Forum, 2025; Randstad, 2025).

Additionally, lasting impact requires alignment across government, education, and the labour market. Ministries of Education and Labour need to integrate micro-credentials and verified skills

into national qualification frameworks. Simultaneously, employer associations and trade unions must be engaged to guarantee that micro-credentials and verified skills reflect real labour market needs.

In practice, this strategy implies a multi-level governance approach: EU-level coordination to ensure standardisation, national governments to embed frameworks locally, and employer-educator partnerships to create demand-driven learning opportunities. Only through this ecosystemic engagement can micro-credentials and verified skills move from policy ambition to daily practice, strengthening mobility, employability, and resilience in Europe's labour market.

Call to action

Europe's future competitiveness depends on our ability to recognise, validate, and trust verified skills, micro-credentials and degrees, across borders. Labour shortages, demographic shifts, and credential fraud cannot be solved by national reforms alone. They require coordinated adoption of micro-credentials and verified skills as the new common language of the labour market.

You are invited to join us in this endeavour! We'd love to get in touch with ambitious CHROs, educators and assessors to collaborate on the design and development of a resilient and trusted labour market using verifiable credentials. We welcome active contributions from various perspectives:

- **CHROs:** Integrate verified skills and micro-credentials into your recruitment processes and improve strategic workforce planning while enhancing mobility opportunities. By moving beyond the traditional CV, you can reduce fraud, widen talent pools, and use skills to improve the match between candidates and roles.
- **Educators:** Embed micro-credentials into curricula to be able to issue and verify micro-credentials. This ensures that learners' achievements are portable, verifiable, and aligned with today's labour-market needs.
- **Skills-assessors:** Standardise skills assessment outcomes across Member States, contributing to recognition and trustworthiness of the ecosystem. Your participation is fundamental to ensure that verified skills are not only portable, but also comparable and meaningful.

In Business Use case 5 (BU5) of the WE BUILD consortium, our joint efforts will contribute to a trusted and transparent skill-based European labour market, one that empowers individuals, supports recruiters, employers and educators and enhances Europe's resilience in a rapidly changing global economy. We are inviting you to scan the QR-code and [get in touch](#) to explore promising opportunities for your HR department and learn more about our initiative. We're looking forward to work with you on a resilient and trusted European labour market.



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