

GREEN CIRCLE BRIEFING REPORT: STAKEHOLDER FOCUS GROUPS ON MICRO-CREDENTIALS IN CONSTRUCTION



Stakeholder consultations across four European countries reveal that the construction sector remains largely traditional in its training approaches, with limited adoption of micro-credentials (MCs) except in Germany. However, there is strong consensus on the potential of MCs to address skills gaps, particularly in **green skills**, **digital technologies**, and **sustainability**. Key challenges include institutional rigidity, lack of standardised frameworks, and cultural resistance to new training models. **Trainers are urged to adopt flexible, modular, and practice-oriented MCs to meet evolving industry demands.**

Micro-credentials represent a strategic opportunity to modernise construction training, support the green and digital transition, and create a more skilled and diverse workforce. Trainers must act as catalysts for change by designing relevant, recognised, and accessible MCs in collaboration with industry and policymakers. The German experience shows that a systematic, recognised MC ecosystem is achievable and beneficial.

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Key Findings

Current Training Landscape

- Portugal, Spain, Greece: Training is based on traditional qualifications and long programmes. Short courses and MCs are rare, poorly integrated, and lack thematic continuity.
- Germany: MCs are already implemented (e.g., specialised certificates, licences) and support career progression.
- Common Gap: Existing training is often regulatory, introductory, and disconnected from real-world needs such as BIM, energy efficiency, and circular economy practices.

Perceived Value of Micro-credentials

- MCs are seen as a tool to deliver short, focused, up-to-date training in:
 - Green construction (energy efficiency, sustainable materials, water management)
 - Digital skills (3D modelling, BIM)
 - Technical skills (waterproofing, insulation, structural reinforcement)
- They can help attract talent, reduce training time, and improve workforce specialisation.

Challenges to Implementation

- Bureaucratic and institutional barriers to accreditation and recognition.
- Lack of standardised frameworks for MCs at national/EU levels.
- Cultural resistance in traditional sectors.
- Limited funding and perception of training as a cost, not investment.
- Need for industry-education collaboration to ensure relevance.

Priority Learners and Skills

- Priority groups: Operators, technicians, engineers, architects.
- Most-needed skills:
 - Technical: Masonry, plumbing, carpentry, waterproofing, digital tools.
 - Green: Energy efficiency, sustainable materials, water management, circular economy.
 - Safety: Occupational risk prevention.

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Recommendations

Develop Flexible, Modular MC Programmes

- Design short, stackable credentials focused on high-demand areas (e.g., “Energy Efficiency in Buildings,” “Sustainable Water Management”).
- Ensure courses are practice-oriented, combining theory with hands-on activities.
- Regularly update content to reflect technological and regulatory changes.

Foster Collaboration with Industry and Accreditation Bodies

- Partner with construction companies, industry associations, and public agencies to align MCs with real needs.
- Involve employers in co-designing and recognising MCs to enhance labour market value.
- Seek integration with national qualifications frameworks to ensure portability and recognition.

Promote Inclusivity and Lifelong Learning

- Use MCs to upskill lateral entrants (e.g., migrants, career changers) and older workers.
- Offer flexible learning pathways to accommodate working professionals.
- Recognise prior informal learning to accelerate certification and inclusion.

Focus on Green and Digital Transition

- Prioritise MCs in:
 - Green building standards (e.g., passive house design, renewable energy systems)
 - Digital tools (BIM, 3D modelling, smart construction)
 - Sustainability practices (circular economy, waste reduction, material innovation)
- Include practical certification modules for on-site application of green technologies.

Advocate for Supportive Policies and Funding

- Lobby for public subsidies or tax incentives for employers and learners undertaking MCs.
- Push for national MC frameworks with clear accreditation pathways.
- Develop skills-tracking systems within companies to map competencies and identify training needs.

Build Awareness and Change Perceptions

- Launch awareness campaigns highlighting the ROI of MCs in productivity and compliance.
- Showcase success stories and pilot projects to demonstrate effectiveness.
- Position MCs as a tool for career advancement, not just compliance.

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