

## **Workshop by Greta Kirdulytė, senior researcher at PPMI**

Learning now occurs in a variety of ways through formal classroom-based learning, communities of practice, personal networks, experiences, the completion of work-related tasks and various short courses (online and on-site) with informal and non-formal learning comprising a large part of individuals' knowledge, skills and competences. Individuals are increasingly seeking flexible and personalised learning as their competences gained in formal education are not future-proof. Learning is a continuous process that lasts for a lifetime where formal education is just one of learning activities that individuals engage in throughout their lives. This understanding that all forms of learning are important and the growing focus on lifelong learning opportunities has increasingly brought about discussions about the importance of validation of prior learning, including through the use of microcredentials.

Microcredentials are a proof of learning, i.e. documents that recognise the learning activities and the learning outcomes resulting from these learning activities. They are used as tools to recognise and validate knowledge, skills and competences both new and prior. Ideally microcredentials should be used for different purposes, including to showcase the specific knowledge, skills and competences, to complement or supplement formal qualifications, and to validate prior learning.

The introduction and use of microcredentials should not be an objective in itself but rather seen as a way to enhance the existing qualification systems by making them the tools for giving value to and recognising newly and priorly gained knowledge, skills and competences, thus making these more visible and encouraging lifelong learning. Validation of prior learning is continuously being improved in different national contexts and using microcredentials can add on to existing practices. Prior learning gained through informal and non-formal learning can often include only limited or very specific knowledge, skills and competences so allowing learners to receive a proof of these would be beneficial to them. Issuing microcredentials following assessment of learning outcomes, obtained either through a specific course leading to a microcredential, or on the basis of assessment of learning outcomes resulting from non-formal and informal learning can be used to add on to the existing practices and widen the opportunities of validation of prior learning.