

Brussels, 23 June 2025

Statement on the use of microcredentials in the electrical and mechanical contracting sectors

In the context of the Union of Skills' Communication which vows to expand the use of microcredentials, backed by Cedefop's upcoming report on "Microcredentials for labour market education and training", EuropeOn and GCP Europe share some observations on microcredentials.

While microcredentials may offer value in **complementing traditional training**, specifically for upskilling in relation to certain technologies or products, there is strong consensus across our network that they **cannot simply replace current educational pathways for initial education**. The latter remain essential in the electrical and mechanical contracting sectors, usually identified in the EU's legal framework as "installers".

Our sector is characterised by a high proportion of very small enterprises. As highlighted in EuropeOn's latest Sector Report¹, **over 70% of electrical contracting companies have fewer than 10 employees**, and many professionals operate as sole traders or micro-businesses. This is also true of the construction sector at large. In this context, workers are expected to have **versatile, comprehensive skill sets**. Basing initial education narrowly on microcredentials is therefore seen as largely irrelevant to the hiring needs of our companies.

Since most companies in our sector are very small, they usually have no dedicated HR staff. Recruitment and training decisions are typically handled by the business owner, who already juggles with multiple responsibilities. As a result, **employers are generally unfamiliar with microcredentials and lack the time and resources to assess them to become a significant part of their hiring strategy**. Recruitment in our sector remains focused on formal diplomas, granted by institutions that are known and hence trusted by employers, and prior experience. Members expressed concern that over-emphasis on microcredentials could add **confusion and administrative burden**, rather than help companies and national associations address skills needs.

We do acknowledge that **microcredentials can play a valuable role in up-skilling and lifelong learning**, for example to train, validate experience and endow employees with new skills related to new technologies (e.g. battery storage installation) and new specialties (e.g. predictive maintenance), as implemented by several of our members' countries. This is a good way to benefit from microcredentials, provided some safeguards are adopted.

¹ <https://europe-on.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/EuropeOn-2024-SECTOR-REPORT-public.pdf>

Indeed, a **reliable, trustable process must be implemented** in order for microcredentials to be a meaningful complement to traditional training. This includes:

- Close involvement of social partners at both national and local levels that ensures employers fully trust the credentials of applicants – a top-down approach will prevent successful implementation;
- Transparent and credible certification processes for micro-credentials, overseen by recognised and independent bodies.

Above all, our members urge policymakers and scholars not to let the microcredentials debate distract them from the core challenge our sector faces: a **severe shortage of skilled workers across Europe**. While innovation in training is indispensable, the structural workforce gap remains the priority.

EuropeOn and GCP Europe remain committed to engaging in constructive dialogue on skills development and vocational education and training (VET). We welcome continued exchange with partners across Europe and are ready to contribute further insights from our sector.

EuropeOn is the European voice of the electrical contracting industry since 1954. With 2.7 million professionals in over 420.000 businesses and with a turnover of over EUR 300 billion, electrical contractors provide electrical installations and services for buildings and infrastructure, enabling cities and citizens to take part in the Energy Transition. Addressing energy, climate, mobility, building and skills policies, EuropeOn is engaged at EU level to foster synergies between the electrical contracting sector and European policymakers. EuropeOn is campaigning in favour of Skills4Climate and is part of the Electrification Alliance, Construction 2050, the Platform for E-mobility, and the Forum for European Electrical Domestic Safety, among others. www.europe-on.org

GCP Europe is the voice of the building services engineering sector, mechanical contractors, plumbers, and HVAC installers. The association represents their interests at the European Union level and, by doing so, contributes to the achievement of the EU's climate, energy, and prosperity goals. <https://gcpeurope.eu/>