

External Evaluation Report of the MCEU Project

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1. Introduction

The Micro-Credentials for the European Union (MCEU) project is a three-year initiative aimed at designing, developing, and piloting interoperable micro-credentials tailored to the European hospitality sector. It aligns with the European Commission’s Recommendation on micro-credentials (2022), with particular attention to the European Digital Credentials Infrastructure (EDCI), the European Learning Model (ELM), and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

The project’s key objectives are:

- To identify relevant skills needs and gaps in the hospitality sector through stakeholder research and survey methodologies.
- To design five modular, stackable micro-credential learning journeys focused on green, digital, managerial, and technical competencies.
- To develop a GDPR-compliant, standards-based credential platform enabling issuing, verification, and revocation functions.
- To pilot the platform and credentials with at least 500 learners across partner countries (Denmark, Iceland, Spain).
- To assess the usability, quality, and labour-market relevance of micro-credentials via learner feedback and stakeholder interviews.
- To ensure effective communication and stakeholder engagement through coordinated dissemination activities, events, and outputs.

This evaluation report assesses the project’s progress based on available public deliverables, web resources (<https://mceu.dk>), and secondary documentation. It includes qualitative analysis of deliverables, proposed methodologies for further data

collection (interviews and surveys), and strategic recommendations for ongoing improvement.

2. Methodology

Desk Review

The core of this evaluation was a structured desk review of all public deliverables listed on the project website, analysed against a set of four consistent qualitative criteria. Each document was assessed in its final published form and scored independently for its (a) contribution to project objectives, (b) technical and editorial quality, (c) relevance and potential impact, and (d) scientific grounding, including methodology, references, and case studies.

Interviews with Project Partners

To complement the desk review, a semi-structured interview methodology was developed targeting key project stakeholders. The purpose of the interviews was to gather insight into the perceived value, utility, and challenges surrounding the creation and implementation of deliverables.

Interviewees were conducted with representatives from each work package (WP) lead, platform developers, course designers, and the coordination team.

The interview instrument (Annex A) includes six thematic sections: project role, quality and relevance of outputs, coordination experience, technical and educational challenges, perceived impacts, and improvement suggestions. Interviews lasted 30–45 minutes and will be recorded (with consent) and anonymised for thematic analysis.

3. Evaluation of Project Management & Collaboration

This section evaluates the management and collaborative dimensions of the MCEU project, drawing on documentary analysis, governance records, and primary data gathered through partner interviews. The assessment examines communication infrastructure and practices, timeline adherence, decision-making effectiveness, and the dynamics of partnership working across the consortium.

Communication Efficiency

The MCEU project adopted Microsoft Teams as its centralised digital collaboration platform, a strategic choice designed to ensure all partners could effectively collaborate regardless of geographical location. The platform architecture demonstrates careful planning, with dedicated channels established for each of the six Work Packages, enabling Task Forces to collaborate, discuss, and develop outputs within defined spaces whilst maintaining visibility across the consortium. The integration of Microsoft Planner provides automated task delegation with calendar notifications, whilst Microsoft Calendar offers shared visibility of project meetings. The platform's document versioning capabilities through SharePoint ensure partners always access current materials, with the lead partner (UCN) maintaining oversight of permissions and quality control.

The planned communication rhythm demonstrates considerable ambition, comprising six Steering Committee meetings scheduled every six months, 36 Project Management Team meetings held monthly, and approximately 50 Task Force meetings distributed across Work Packages. Interview data confirms this infrastructure has functioned effectively in practice, with partners reporting that despite not having previously worked together as a consortium, efficient coordination enabled productive working relationships from an early stage. Partners particularly noted that the division of roles was clear and task allocation efficient, with individuals knowing their responsibilities and delivering accordingly. The introduction of recorded PMT sessions enhanced transparency and allowed partners to revisit strategic discussions when needed.

Adherence to Timeline

Project documentation reveals a structured approach to time management, with time and activity plans developed for each Work Package and accessible through the Teams platform. The monitoring system includes automated email notifications via Planner when deliverable deadlines approach, and progress tracking forms a standing agenda item at monthly PMT meetings. As of the time of writing this report all relevant deliverables had been submitted by deadline and published on the project website.

Interview findings corroborate that whilst small delays occurred periodically, partners demonstrated capacity to address these issues and maintain overall project trajectory. The project has implemented revised milestone timelines where necessary, as evidenced in the Piloting Strategy Document which includes both original and adjusted timeframes. Notably, the most significant delays identified stem from factors external to the project itself, specifically the extended beta status of the European Blockchain Services Infrastructure (EBSI). This infrastructure, critical to the digital credentialing component, remained in development longer than originally anticipated, creating unavoidable challenges for WP4 deliverables. The platform design documents

acknowledge this complexity, with EBSI integration identified as a technical challenge requiring careful management.

Decision-Making Quality

The Steering Committee provides the project's primary strategic governance mechanism, with two representatives from each partner organisation ensuring balanced decision-making authority across the consortium.

The governance structure appropriately separates strategic oversight (SC) from operational implementation (Consortium/PMT), with the latter meeting monthly to coordinate day-to-day progress, technical developments, and output delivery. This separation allows the SC to maintain focus on strategic alignment whilst empowering Work Package leaders and Task Forces to address practical challenges. The documented risk management processes, including a Risk Matrix reviewed at each PMT meeting, provide systematic mechanisms for identifying and addressing emerging issues before they become critical. Interview data confirms that decisions regarding changes require SC involvement before amendments are prepared for the Commission, ensuring appropriate governance discipline.

Collaboration Dynamics

The consortium brings together eight partners with complementary expertise spanning education, industry, and technical specialisations. UCN act2learn provides project coordination and strategic oversight, whilst Hosco contributes hospitality network and employment insights. Diplomasafe leads technical platform development, and VET partners including SAF, EUHT St Pol, and IDÁN bring vocational training expertise from Switzerland, Spain, and Iceland respectively. Access Advisors manages communication and dissemination, whilst Lobster Ink handles course development and digital learning solutions. This diversity of expertise creates rich potential for cross-sectoral learning whilst requiring careful coordination.

Interview findings indicate that collaboration dynamics have exceeded expectations. Partners had not previously worked together as a consortium, yet effective coordination mechanisms enabled productive relationships to develop. The clear division of roles and efficient task allocation meant partners understood their responsibilities and fulfilled them reliably. Budgeting and financial controls have proved adequate, with a Budget Management Plan developed following the kick-off meeting and regular financial reporting through designated channels.

Partners acknowledged that the workload and associated KPIs present significant challenges, with all consortium members considering the demands high and somewhat

difficult to deliver given available resources. However, this was characterised as manageable rather than insurmountable, suggesting the project has struck an appropriate balance between ambition and feasibility. The Task Force structure, with subject matter experts working alongside WP leaders on deliverable development, appears to have functioned as an effective mechanism for distributing workload whilst maintaining quality through collaborative review.

4. Deliverable Evaluation Results

This chapter presents a systematic evaluation of fifteen deliverables submitted by the MCEU consortium during the project's first implementation phase. Each deliverable was assessed against four criteria:

Contribution to Project Objectives: how effectively the deliverable advances the core aims of the MCEU project. The evaluation considered whether the deliverable directly enables subsequent project activities, whether it addresses the stated work package objectives, and whether it contributes meaningfully to the project's overall goal of modernising vocational education in hospitality.

Quality (Grammar, Spelling, Formatting, Structure): This criterion evaluates the presentation and readability of the deliverable. Assessors examined whether the document is free from grammatical and spelling errors, whether it follows a logical and coherent structure, whether formatting (headings, tables, figures) is consistent and professional, and whether the document is accessible to its intended audience. Consideration was also given to whether visual aids (charts, diagrams, tables) are used effectively to enhance comprehension.

Impact and Relevance to Stakeholders: how useful and applicable the deliverable is to the project's key stakeholder groups: learners, VET providers, employers, and policy-makers. The evaluation assessed whether the deliverable addresses genuine stakeholder needs, whether it provides practical tools or guidance that stakeholders can act upon, and whether it supports the broader adoption and recognition of micro-credentials within the European hospitality sector.

Scientific/Legal Basis (Use of References, Case Studies, Methodology): the rigour and credibility of the deliverable's foundations. Assessors considered whether appropriate EU frameworks and standards are referenced (e.g., ESCO, EQF, GDPR, Council Recommendation on Micro-Credentials), whether methodologies are clearly described and justified, whether claims are supported by evidence or citations, and whether the deliverable demonstrates awareness of relevant research, case studies, or best practices in the field.

Each criterion was rated qualitatively as Strong, Adequate, or Needs Attention.

The evaluation reveals a project that is progressing well across its core technical and developmental work packages. Of the fifteen deliverables assessed, fourteen received a "Strong" rating for their contribution to project objectives, demonstrating that the consortium has maintained clear alignment between its outputs and the project's overarching goals of developing interoperable micro-credentials for the European hospitality sector.

The project demonstrates particular strength in three areas. First, the legal and regulatory foundations are robust: deliverables such as D1.3 (Data Management Plan), D4.1 (Requirements Document), and D4.2 (Platform Design Document) exhibit comprehensive grounding in GDPR, the EU Council Recommendation on micro-credentials (2022), and relevant European frameworks including the EQF, EDCI, and ESCO. Second, stakeholder orientation is consistently strong, with twelve deliverables rated "Strong" for impact and relevance—the survey methodology, skills report, and platform documentation all demonstrate thoughtful consideration of VET provider, learner, and employer needs. Third, the technical work packages (WP2–WP5) show coherent progression from research through design to implementation readiness.

D1.1 Digital Platform for Project Collaboration and Communication Management

This deliverable serves as an onboarding document for the MCEU project's digital collaboration infrastructure, centred on Microsoft Teams. It provides project partners with comprehensive guidance on accessing and navigating the platform, including user login procedures, folder structures, and channel organisation by Work Package. The document outlines communication protocols, meeting schedules (Steering Committee, PMT, and Task Force meetings), and the use of Microsoft Planner for task assignment and deadline tracking. It also addresses document management procedures, version control through SharePoint integration, and security measures including GDPR compliance. The deliverable aims to ensure all consortium members across Denmark, Iceland, and Spain can collaborate effectively from the project's outset.

Contribution to Project Objectives: Strong The deliverable directly supports the project's coordination and communication objectives by establishing the foundational infrastructure for cross-partner collaboration. It enables the effective management of all six Work Packages and is essential for timely delivery of subsequent outputs.

Quality: Adequate The document is well-structured with clear numbered sections, a table of contents, and consistent branding. Visual aids (screenshots) enhance usability.

However, minor grammatical errors are present (e.g., "The WPs has its own timetables"), and some figure captions lack descriptive detail.

Impact and Relevance to Stakeholders: Strong Highly relevant for internal stakeholders, providing practical guidance tailored to different project roles (WP leaders, Task Force members, PMT). The document addresses real operational needs including access control, meeting coordination, and document collaboration across the consortium.

Scientific/Legal Basis: Adequate The deliverable appropriately references GDPR compliance and relevant certifications (ISO 27001, HIPAA). It links forward to the forthcoming Data Management Plan (D1.3). However, as an operational guide, it does not include academic references or detailed methodological frameworks, which is acceptable for this document type but limits its evidential depth.

D1.2 Digital Platform for Project Collaboration and Communication Management

This deliverable establishes the governance and quality infrastructure for the three-year MCEU project. It outlines the composition and responsibilities of three key management bodies: the Steering Committee (SC), Advisory Board (AB), and Project Management Team (PMT). The document details a comprehensive risk management framework, including a risk register and visual risk matrix that categorises project risks by likelihood and impact. It also presents the quality assurance methodology, encompassing peer-review processes for deliverables, a schedule of regular meetings (SC, PMT, and Task Force), and quantified indicators for monitoring progress. The plan concludes with provisions for two external evaluations at mid-point and project end to provide independent assessment.

Contribution to Project Objectives: Strong The deliverable directly supports the project's capacity to manage a complex, multi-partner EU initiative across Denmark, Iceland, and Spain. By establishing clear governance structures, risk mitigation protocols, and quality assurance processes, it provides the essential foundation for delivering the project's core objectives of developing and piloting micro-credentials.

Quality: Adequate The document is well-structured with a clear table of contents, consistent headings, and effective use of figures and diagrams. Minor issues include a numbering error in section 1.1 ("1.1. 1.1 Steering Committee"), placeholder text ("xxx") in organisational charts indicating unfilled positions, and occasional typographical errors (e.g., "too all members"). Overall presentation is professional and aligned with EU branding requirements.

Impact and Relevance to Stakeholders: Strong The governance framework ensures meaningful stakeholder involvement through the multi-partner SC and externally-composed AB. The risk register explicitly addresses stakeholder-relevant concerns such as learner dropout rates and survey response challenges. The inclusion of external evaluators further strengthens accountability to both project partners and the European Commission.

Scientific/Legal Basis: Adequate The document appropriately references the Grant Agreement and EU visibility requirements as its legal foundation. The risk management approach follows standard likelihood-impact methodology, and the quality assurance framework is procedurally sound. However, the deliverable would benefit from explicit references to established project management standards or academic literature on risk management and quality assurance in EU-funded projects.

D1.3 Data Management Plan and IPR Management

This deliverable, establishes the legal and procedural framework for managing intellectual property rights and personal data across the MCEU consortium. The document comprises two main components: an IPR management section outlining ownership rules for Background and Foreground IP in accordance with the Grant Agreement and Erasmus+ open access requirements, and a comprehensive Joint Data Controller Agreement involving all eight project partners. The data management plan details GDPR compliance measures, assigns specific data protection responsibilities to each partner aligned with their respective work packages, and establishes protocols for handling data subject rights, security breaches, and third-country transfers. The agreement includes signature pages for formal adoption by all consortium members.

Contribution to Project Objectives: Strong The deliverable directly supports the project's goal of developing a GDPR-compliant credential platform by establishing clear data governance across all partners. It assigns specific responsibilities aligned with work packages (WP1–WP6) and ensures the legal foundation necessary for processing learner data during the planned 500-participant pilot.

Quality: Strong The document is professionally formatted with consistent MCEU branding, clear section numbering, and logical structure.

Impact and Relevance to Stakeholders: Strong The deliverable addresses stakeholder interests by clearly defining data subject rights, establishing complaint-handling procedures, and specifying that only ordinary personal data will be processed. The joint controller arrangement ensures accountability across partners in Denmark, Iceland, Spain, Netherlands, and Belgium, which is essential for cross-border credential recognition.

Scientific/Legal Basis: Strong The document demonstrates robust legal grounding, directly referencing multiple GDPR articles (Articles 13, 14, 24, 25, 26, 28, 30, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36) and Chapter V provisions. It builds upon the Consortium Agreement and Grant Agreement, and includes a cited reference to the Erasmus+ Programme Guide regarding open educational resources requirements.

D.1.4: Minutes of Consortium Meeting and Progress Report

v.1

D1.4 is a governance and progress document that consolidates the minutes from two Steering Committee meetings and three Consortium meetings held between February 2024 and March 2025. The document outlines the composition, roles, and strategic influence of both governance bodies, records key decisions made throughout the project's first phase, and provides a detailed Work Package status overview. It serves as both an accountability mechanism for EU reporting and an internal coordination tool for consortium partners, tracking deliverable submissions, resource utilisation, and forward planning.

Contribution to Project Objectives: Strong This deliverable directly supports the project's coordination and management objectives by documenting strategic decisions, partner responsibilities, and implementation progress across all Work Packages. Evidence of strong progress is recorded, including 11 deliverables submitted with 8 approved, five courses finalised, and the piloting strategy endorsed for 500 learners.

Quality: Strong The document is well-organised with a clear table of contents, logical section hierarchy, and consistent formatting throughout. The structure moves coherently from executive summary through governance bodies to detailed meeting summaries.

Impact and Relevance to Stakeholders: Adequate As primarily an internal governance document, its direct external impact is limited; however, it provides essential transparency for consortium partners and satisfies EU reporting requirements. The document candidly acknowledges challenges, notably dissemination KPIs falling below targets (66 LinkedIn followers versus 1,000+ goals) but does not necessarily present an improved strategy based on stakeholder consultations.

Scientific/Legal Basis : Strong The document records substantive debates on micro-credential definitions and recognition standards. As a governance record rather than a research output, extensive scientific citations are not expected; the methodology for progress tracking and decision documentation is sound and fit for purpose.

D2.1 Survey Methodology

This deliverable presents the survey methodology that the MCEU project consortium used to gather primary data from hospitality sector stakeholders across Europe. It outlines a three-year phased approach: Year 1 focuses on identifying current and emerging skills needs within the hospitality industry, Year 2 investigates barriers and enablers for micro-credential recognition, and Year 3 assesses how micro-credentials can be integrated into existing vocational training systems. The document details target populations, survey content areas, data collection approaches which leverage Hosco's extensive network of over 2 million hospitality professionals. It also describes, stakeholder mapping, data processing and analysis procedures, and ethical considerations including GDPR compliance. Visual examples of outreach materials (email campaigns, LinkedIn posts, survey interfaces) are included to illustrate the dissemination strategy.

Contribution to Project Objectives: Strong The deliverable directly supports the project's core objective of identifying skills needs and gaps in the hospitality sector through stakeholder research and survey methodologies. The three-year roadmap is explicitly designed to inform micro-credential development in WP3, with findings feeding directly into course design. The phased approach ensures iterative learning across the project lifecycle.

Quality: Strong The document is professionally formatted with consistent branding, a clear table of contents, and logical sectioning. Visual elements (screenshots of surveys, email templates, stakeholder matrix) enhance readability. Minor inconsistencies exist in section numbering (Section 5 and 6 headings), but overall the presentation is polished and accessible.

Impact and Relevance to Stakeholders: Strong The stakeholder mapping matrix demonstrates thoughtful categorisation by influence and interest levels. Engagement strategies are tailored to each group, and the document identifies clear pathways to reach approximately 300,000 relevant hospitality professionals and businesses across 31 EU and Schengen countries, drawn from Hosco's broader global network of over 2 million members. Consortium partner responsibilities for regional outreach in Spain, Denmark, and Iceland are well defined.

Scientific/Legal Basis: Adequate The methodology appropriately references the ESCO framework for skills categorisation and addresses GDPR compliance comprehensively. However, the document lacks explicit citations to academic survey methodology literature or the European Commission's 2022 Recommendation on micro-credentials. The data analysis section, whilst functional, could benefit from more detailed statistical approaches and validation mechanisms.

D2.2 Current and Future Skills Needed in the Hospitality Industry

This 54-page report presents the findings from the Year 1 skills needs assessment survey conducted by Hosco within the MCEU project framework. The survey gathered responses from 3,810 hospitality professionals, employers, and students across 31 EU and Schengen countries between May and September 2024. The report analyses skills confidence and importance across seven hospitality departments (culinary, front office, events, F&B service, housekeeping, bar & beverage, and spa), identifying gaps between current competencies and career advancement priorities. The findings directly informed the selection of five core micro-credential skill areas: two green skills, one digital skill, one managerial skill, and one technical skill, aligning the project's training development with real industry needs.

Contribution to Project Objectives: Strong The report fulfils a core project objective by providing the empirical foundation for micro-credential course design. Its findings have demonstrably shaped the selection of the five skill areas for Work Package 3, ensuring demand-led credential development aligned with EU green and digital transition priorities.

Quality: Strong The document is professionally formatted with consistent MCEU branding, clear section headings, and well-labelled charts and tables. The structure follows a logical progression from executive summary through demographic insights, department-specific analysis, key findings, and actionable recommendations. The appendices provide transparent methodological documentation.

Impact and Relevance to Stakeholders: Strong The report captures diverse stakeholder perspectives by including hospitality professionals at various career stages, employers/hiring decision-makers, and students from multiple EU countries. The department-specific breakdowns and hiring manager perspectives ensure the findings are immediately applicable to both educational providers designing training and employers seeking to understand workforce development priorities.

Scientific/Legal Basis: Strong The methodology is robust, employing the ESCO (European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations) framework to ensure EU-wide skill standardisation and transferability. The report includes a comprehensive methodological appendix detailing survey design, data collection procedures, ethical considerations (GDPR compliance, informed consent, anonymisation), and quantitative analysis approaches. The sample size of 3,810 respondents provides statistical credibility.

D3.1 – MCEU Micro Credential Course Framework

D3.1 is a framework document produced by Lobster Ink in collaboration with project partners (UCN, Idan, EUHT Sant Pol, SAF) and submitted in November 2024. The deliverable outlines the pedagogical, technical, and regulatory foundations for developing five micro-credential learning journeys within the project. It specifies how courses will be designed, delivered, and assessed using the Lobster Ink learning platform, while ensuring alignment with EU standards on micro-credentials and national regulations in Denmark, Iceland, and Spain. The document includes detailed course frameworks covering green/environmental skills (2 pathways), managerial skills (1 pathway), digital skills (1 pathway), and technical skills (1 pathway), with specific lessons, learning outcomes, assessment methods, and estimated durations for each. The annexes provide the full course framework tables and the EU's 10 Principles of Micro-Credentials as reference material.

Contribution to Project Objectives: Strong The deliverable directly addresses the project's objective of designing five modular, stackable micro-credential learning journeys by presenting detailed course frameworks across green, digital, managerial, and technical competency areas. It builds upon the skills needs analysis from Work Package 2 (D2.2 survey) to ensure courses respond to identified hospitality sector gaps. The framework supports platform development objectives by describing the Lobster Ink platform's capabilities for issuing, verifying, and managing credentials, and explicitly references the planned 500-learner pilot across partner countries.

Quality: Adequate The document is professionally presented with clear section headings, a table of contents, version history, and consistent MCEU branding throughout. The structure follows a logical progression from strategic context through to detailed course frameworks in the annexes. Annexe 2 is a reproduction of a fact sheet, through screenshots, rather than a reference or a summary. Overall readability and organisation are satisfactory.

Impact and Relevance to Stakeholders : Strong The framework demonstrates strong stakeholder orientation by clearly defining target audiences across multiple hospitality departments (culinary, events, housekeeping, spa, F&B, bar, front office) and addressing skills identified as priorities by industry hiring managers in the preceding survey. The multi-language delivery in English, Spanish, Danish, and Icelandic ensures accessibility across partner countries. Alignment with EU green and digital transition priorities enhances the credentials' value proposition for employers and learners seeking career advancement in the hospitality sector.

Scientific/Legal Basis: Strong The document demonstrates solid grounding in EU policy frameworks, explicitly referencing the EU's 10 Principles of Micro-Credentials,

the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), European Digital Credentials Infrastructure (EDCI), and ESCO skill definitions. National regulatory contexts for Denmark, Iceland, and Spain are addressed, with specific citations to Spanish government sources and Icelandic higher education legislation. The learning methodology section cites established educational theorists (Malcolm Knowles, John Sweller, Brenda Sugrue) to underpin instructional design decisions, and assessment criteria reference Svinicki (1999) for validity and reliability principles.

D3.2 Micro-Credential Course Programme

D3.2 presents five complete micro-credential courses designed for hospitality professionals. Course 1, "Sustainable Awareness in Hospitality: Housekeeping and Spa", teaches waste reduction, water conservation, and energy-saving practices through modules on reducing water waste, managing laundry procedures, and selecting eco-friendly products such as biodegradable and refillable containers. Course 2, "Sustainable Management of Waste and Resources in Kitchens", covers the Waste Pyramid hierarchy, pre-consumer vs. post-consumer waste distinction, FIFO storage systems, menu engineering for "total food utilisation," and includes a module developed in collaboration with the World Wildlife Fund and American Hotel and Lodging Association on fighting food waste. Course 3, "Supervising and Leading in Hospitality", addresses service standard-setting, problem-solving techniques, decision-making frameworks, and quality supervision through video lessons and interactive activities. Course 4, "Introduction to Digital Skills", covers digital etiquette, collaboration through hospitality technology systems (PMS, POS, booking engines), and information security/corporate security protocols. Course 5, "Complying with Food Safety and Hygiene", provides comprehensive training on HACCP's seven principles, cross-contamination prevention, major food allergens identification, and practical scenarios for allergen identification in dishes such as Caesar salad and chicken curry. Each course includes theory assessments with varied question formats (multiple choice, true/false, matching, ordering) totalling approximately 70 questions across all courses.

Contribution to Project Objectives: Strong The deliverable fulfils the project's core objective of designing modular micro-credential learning journeys focused on green, digital, managerial, and technical competencies. The five courses correspond to the skills identified in the D2.2 survey (e.g., 61.7% of culinary hiring managers ranking food quality supervision as critical, 44% prioritising food safety compliance). The courses are designed for stackability and support the target of piloting with 500 learners across Denmark, Iceland, and Spain.

Quality: Adequate. The document follows a consistent template for each course with clear sections for learning outcomes, lesson names, durations, and assessment questions. Presentation includes supporting resources such as checklists, posters, and

huddle cards. However, several spelling errors appear throughout (e.g., "AWARENSS" repeated multiple times in course titles, "Th eassessment," "participating"), and some course durations seem inconsistent with their content depth (e.g., a 2-minute course on housekeeping sustainability, a 3-minute general sustainability course).

Impact and Relevance to Stakeholders: Strong The courses address practical, day-to-day skills that hospitality workers require, with content directly applicable to housekeeping, spa, culinary, F&B service, and events departments. The multi-language availability (English, Spanish, Danish, Icelandic) ensures accessibility across pilot countries. Assessment questions use realistic workplace scenarios (e.g., identifying allergens in specific dishes, making energy-saving decisions in guest rooms). The target audience analysis appropriately spans emerging talent (18–30) and experienced professionals seeking upskilling, including unemployed individuals requiring retraining.

Scientific/Legal Basis: Adequate The deliverable demonstrates variable grounding across courses. The food safety course appropriately references HACCP—a well-established international framework—and covers the 14 major EU food allergens in compliance with EU/UK food information regulations. The "Fighting Food Waste in Hotels" module was developed in collaboration with the World Wildlife Fund and American Hotel and Lodging Association, lending credibility. However, the document generally lacks explicit citations for statistics presented (e.g., "63 million tons of food wasted annually in the US" is stated without source attribution). The sustainability and digital skills courses rely primarily on general best-practice advice without reference to academic research, industry standards documentation, or regulatory sources. The managerial skills course presents practical techniques but without grounding in leadership theory or referenced case studies.

D3.3 MCEU Micro-Credential Script and Quality Assessment

D.3.3 combines two project outputs: the quality assessment framework and complete course transcripts. The quality assessment section (pages 5–9) provides a VET provider-led evaluation methodology comprising a checklist covering course identification, transparency, assessment, recognition/portability, and learner-centred design. The scripts section (pages 10–216) presents full transcripts for all five micro-credential courses—covering sustainability, digital skills, food safety, leadership, and waste management—in four languages (English, Danish, Icelandic, and Spanish). The document was developed collaboratively by Lobster Ink and VET partners from Denmark, Iceland, and Spain, with version control showing iterative quality improvements.

Contribution to Project Objectives: Strong The deliverable directly addresses multiple core MCEU objectives: it operationalises the micro-credential framework

(D3.1), provides the instructional content for the five modular learning journeys targeting green, digital, managerial, and technical competencies, and establishes the quality assurance mechanism required for the piloting phase. The multilingual provision ensures accessibility across the three partner countries (Denmark, Iceland, Spain) and supports the target of 500 learners.

Quality: Strong The document is well-structured with a clear table of contents, version history, and logical progression from quality evaluation methodology to course transcripts. The formatting is consistent and professional. The scripts are appropriate for the videos for which they are intended.

Impact and Relevance to Stakeholders: Strong The deliverable offers high value to multiple stakeholder groups: VET providers receive a standardised quality evaluation framework and ready-to-use course content; learners gain access to professionally developed training materials in their native languages; employers benefit from credentials underpinned by transparent EU-aligned standards. The four-language provision (English, Danish, Icelandic, Spanish) maximises accessibility and demonstrates genuine attention to the European dimension of the project.

Scientific/Legal Basis: Strong The quality assessment methodology is firmly grounded in EU policy frameworks, explicitly referencing the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), EU Micro-Credential Recommendations (2022), and the ten principles for designing and issuing micro-credentials. The document provides detailed EQF level descriptors with proper attribution to Europass sources. The VET partner classification of courses at EQF levels 2–3 follows a structured methodology involving group discussions and learning outcome analysis against the three EQF categories (knowledge, skills, responsibility/autonomy). The checklist systematically addresses mandatory and recommended EU standard elements.

D4.1 Requirements Document

This 25-page technical document, produced by Diplomasafe with input from project partners (IDAN, UCN, Access Advisors), defines the functional and non-functional requirements for the MCEU Credentials Issuing Online Platform. It analyses the needs of three core user groups (VET providers, learners, and employers), presents detailed user scenarios and journeys for credential issuance, verification, and revocation, and specifies technical, semantic, legal, and interoperability requirements. The document serves as the foundational blueprint for platform design and development under Work Package 4, ensuring alignment with EU frameworks including the European Digital Credentials for Learning (EDC), European Blockchain Services Infrastructure (EBSI), and the Council's 2022 Recommendation on micro-credentials.

Contribution to Project Objectives: Strong The deliverable directly addresses the project's core objective of developing a GDPR-compliant, standards-based credential platform with issuing, verification, and revocation functions. It provides the essential technical specifications and user requirements needed to guide platform development.

Quality: Strong The document is professionally structured with a clear table of contents, document change history, well-formatted tables, and consistent use of the MCEU visual identity. The writing is clear and technically precise, with only minor inconsistencies in formatting conventions.

Impact and Relevance to Stakeholders: Strong The document demonstrates excellent stakeholder focus through detailed needs analysis for VET providers, learners, and employers, complemented by concrete user journey scenarios featuring named personas (Rafael, Kristjan, Ella). Requirements explicitly address stakeholder priorities including accessibility, data control, and cross-border portability.

Scientific/Legal Basis: Strong The deliverable is firmly grounded in EU policy frameworks, explicitly referencing the Council of the EU's 2022 Recommendation on micro-credentials, GDPR, eIDAS regulation, and established standards such as ESCO and Europass. The annexes reproduce the European standard elements for micro-credential description, and a formal references section is included.

D4.2 Online Platform Design Document & Publishing COde Libraries

D4.2 provides a blueprint for the MCEU Credentials-Issuing Online Platform. The document details the platform's architecture, including three core systems: the Viewer System (for learners and employers to manage, view, and share credentials), the Issuer System (for VET providers to create templates and issue credentials), and the REST API System (handling backend operations). It specifies the technology stack (TypeScript, Vue.js, NestJS, PostgreSQL), authentication mechanisms (Keycloak with eIDAS integration), database schema, and integration requirements with European infrastructures (Europass, EDC, EBSI). The deliverable also outlines the code repository structure and version control strategy for development commencing in July 2024.

Contribution to Project Objectives: Strong The deliverable directly addresses the project's third objective of developing a GDPR-compliant, standards-based credential platform with issuing, verification, and revocation functions. The technical specifications comprehensively cover all required platform functionalities and explicitly align with European Digital Credentials Infrastructure (EDCI) and the European Learning Model (ELM v3).

Quality: Strong The document is well-structured with a clear table of contents, list of abbreviations, document change history, and logical section progression. High-level diagrams effectively illustrate system architecture.

Impact and Relevance to Stakeholders: Strong The design explicitly addresses the needs of all key stakeholder groups—VET providers, learners, and employers—through dedicated system components and user journeys. Practical features such as FAQ pages, support request functionality, and consent-based credential sharing demonstrate consideration for real-world usability. The integration with Europass and EBSI enhances cross-border relevance for the European hospitality sector.

Scientific / Legal Basis: Strong The document appropriately references the EU Council Recommendation on micro-credentials (2022), GDPR (Regulation 2016/679), and relevant European frameworks (EDC, EBSI, ELM v3, EQF). It builds upon the prior requirements document (D4.1). While the references section is concise, this is appropriate for a technical design document, and the regulatory and standards-based foundations are well-articulated throughout.

D4.3 User Onboarding Guide

The User Onboarding Guide (D4.3) is a 24-page comprehensive resource developed by Diplomasafe to facilitate the installation and use of the Credentials Issuing Online Platform. The guide supports three key user groups: VET provider administrators, learners, and employers. It provides step-by-step instructions for platform installation (including Docker and Node.js prerequisites), user management (CRUD operations), credential issuance, and verification processes. The document incorporates visual aids such as screenshots and terminal command examples, troubleshooting tips, FAQs, and a support ticket system. It also addresses EBSI Conformity Testing, which is essential for VET providers to establish their unique identity within the European Blockchain Services Infrastructure and issue verifiable credentials recognised across the EBSI network.

Contribution to Project Objectives: Strong The guide directly supports WP4's objective of establishing a robust digital credential issuing platform and enables the piloting activities in WP5. It educates VET providers to independently deploy and manage the platform, facilitating credential issuance for the targeted 500 learners across partner countries.

Quality: Adequate The document demonstrates professional formatting with clear section headings, consistent visual branding (MCEU logo, EU funding disclaimer), and logical structure progressing from introduction through installation to user-specific

functionalities. Visual aids enhance comprehension. The guide acknowledges it may contain outdated information and directs users to the GitHub repository for updates.

Impact and Relevance to Stakeholders: Strong The guide addresses the practical needs of all primary stakeholders: VET administrators receive installation and credential management guidance; learners understand how to access, store, and share credentials; employers can verify credential authenticity. The multilingual support (Spanish, Danish, Icelandic) enhances accessibility across partner countries.

Scientific/Legal Basis: Strong The guide demonstrates strong alignment with European standards, referencing EBSI, European Digital Credentials for Learning (EDC), EUROPASS, and eIDAS regulations. It explains DID/keypair requirements, and details the EBSI Conformity Test process necessary for authorised credential issuance within the EU framework.

D5.1 Piloting Program Strategy

The deliverable outlines the methodology and governance structure for piloting micro-credential courses within Work Package 5. It establishes a comprehensive framework for testing MC courses with learners, employers, and educators across three partner countries (Iceland, Denmark, and Spain). The document introduces the AEIOU ethnographic framework (Activities, Environment, Interactions, Objects, Users) as the primary data collection methodology and defines clear milestones, timelines, and quality assurance processes. It also establishes a dedicated Taskforce WP5 with named representatives from each consortium partner to coordinate piloting activities and ensure alignment with project objectives, including the target of enrolling 500 learners.

Contribution to Project Objectives: Strong The deliverable directly addresses WP5's core objectives: testing MC courses, gathering multi-stakeholder feedback, refining credentials iteratively, and developing scalable enrolment/issuance processes. It provides a clear operational roadmap aligned with the project's goal of piloting interoperable micro-credentials across the three partner countries.

Quality (Grammar, Spelling, Formatting, Structure): Adequate The document follows a logical structure with a table of contents, numbered sections, and clearly formatted tables identifying taskforce members and milestone timelines. However, there are occasional grammatical inconsistencies, some incomplete sentences, and minor typographical errors that would benefit from tighter editing.

Impact and Relevance to Stakeholders: Strong The deliverable explicitly identifies and engages all key stakeholder groups—learners, employers, educators, and policymakers—through structured feedback mechanisms. The Taskforce composition

ensures industry representation (Hosco, LobsterInk, SAF) alongside educational partners, enhancing practical relevance to the hospitality sector.

Scientific / Legal Basis: Strong The document is grounded in a recognised ethnographic research framework (AEIOU) with proper citation, aligns with EU regulatory standards (GDPR, EQF, ESCO), and references the EU's 10 Principles of Micro-Credentials. Quality assurance processes are explicitly linked to European frameworks for credentialing and skills recognition.

D6.1 Communication and Dissemination Plan

The deliverable establishes the framework for all external communication activities throughout the MCEU project's three-year duration. The plan defines five specific objectives centred on raising awareness of micro-credentials, engaging stakeholders, transferring knowledge, promoting recognition, and showcasing EU funding. It identifies eight target audience categories, specifies online and offline communication channels, and outlines a phased implementation approach across four stages (Set-up, Development, Consolidation, and Finalisation). The document includes detailed activity planning tables, KPIs for monitoring, and mechanisms for ensuring synergy across all work packages.

Contribution to Project Objectives: Strong The plan directly supports MCEU's core objectives by establishing clear pathways to reach 500+ learners, engage employers and VET providers, and promote micro-credential uptake across Denmark, Iceland, and Spain. The five specific objectives align explicitly with the project's broader aims of fostering innovation, upskilling, and systemic change within European hospitality VET.

Quality (Grammar, Spelling, Formatting, Structure): Adequate The document is professionally presented with consistent MCEU branding, comprehensive tables, and logical section organisation. However, there are minor structural inconsistencies, including irregular section numbering (jumping from "2. List of Abbreviations" to "4. Executive Summary" to "1. Introduction") and occasional formatting variations. The writing is generally clear.

Impact and Relevance to Stakeholders: Strong The plan demonstrates thorough stakeholder analysis with tailored strategies for eight distinct target groups. It provides specific KPIs (e.g., reaching 600 learners, 1,500 employers, 60 policy-makers) and defines appropriate channels for each audience. The inclusion of multilingual content strategies and hybrid event formats enhances accessibility and potential reach across partner countries.

Scientific/Legal Basis: Strong The plan is firmly grounded in EU policy frameworks, explicitly referencing the Council Recommendation on micro-credentials (2022), the EU Skills Agenda, the European Education Area, and the Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027. The references section cites relevant EU legal instruments, and the document demonstrates alignment with Erasmus+ communication requirements and GDPR considerations for data collection.

D6.2 Report on the Project Communicatoin: Progress and Results

The deliverable documents the communication and dissemination activities undertaken by the MCEU consortium between January and December 2024. The report provides an overview of online channels established (LinkedIn, YouTube, project website), details promotional materials produced (visual identity, one-pagers, overview presentation, promotional video, roundtables guidelines, newsletter), and tracks stakeholder meetings and event attendance. It evaluates progress against Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and targets set in the Communication and Dissemination Plan (D6.1). It identifies challenges encountered during Year 1, proposes concrete solutions for Year 2, and outlines a detailed timeline with designated partner responsibilities for ongoing activities.

Contribution to Project Objectives: Adequate The report directly supports the project's objective of ensuring effective communication and stakeholder engagement through coordinated dissemination activities. It establishes foundational communication infrastructure (website, social media, branding) and demonstrates proactive reflection on challenges, though several KPIs remain significantly below target at this stage.

Quality: Strong The document is well-structured with a logical flow from introduction through to conclusion. It includes clear & informative tables (KPI tracking, challenges/solutions, activity planning), figures and annexes.

Impact and Relevance to Stakeholders: Adequate The report documents engagement efforts across multiple stakeholder groups (VET providers, employers, learners, policymakers) through various channels and events. However, actual engagement metrics remain low (58 LinkedIn followers vs. 500 target; 15 newsletter subscribers vs. 1,500 target; no press releases achieved). The acknowledgement of these gaps and proposed remedial actions demonstrate awareness of stakeholder engagement importance.

Scientific/Legal Basis: Adequate The report references the Communication and Dissemination Plan (D6.1) as its methodological foundation and uses established

monitoring tools (Google Analytics, LinkedIn Analytics, Continuous Reporting File). It properly acknowledges EU funding requirements and includes visibility guidelines in the annexes. However, the document lacks external references to communication best practices or benchmarking against similar EU-funded projects.

5. Project Impact

The MCEU project is well-positioned to generate multi-level impacts across education providers, learners, employers, and policymakers. While much of the project's technical and curricular work has focused on foundational deliverables, the true value will materialise through the adoption and use of the credentialing infrastructure and modular courses by real users—especially during and after the piloting phase. This section outlines the project's anticipated and emerging impacts, drawing on evidence from the reviewed deliverables, and identifies the measures through which impact will be assessed in the final evaluation.

Impact on Learners

The project's design prioritises learner-centred outcomes. The five micro-credential courses—Sustainable Awareness, Waste and Resource Management, Supervising and Leading, Digital Skills in Hospitality, and Food Safety and Hygiene—were developed in direct response to skills gaps identified through survey research involving hospitality professionals, employers, and job seekers across 31 EU and Schengen countries. According to the Piloting Strategy Document (D5.1), the pilot phase will systematically assess whether micro-credentials lead to improved job opportunities, promotions, or increased earnings among participants.

The Communication and Dissemination Plan emphasises that micro-credentials offer learners flexibility and adaptability through modular learning experiences, and may support access to higher education for individuals regardless of their backgrounds. The deliverables consistently frame micro-credentials as instruments for workforce resilience and enhanced employability, particularly for workers navigating disruption from the COVID-19 pandemic and the twin green and digital transitions.

Impact on Employers

The project has embedded employer engagement throughout its design. The Requirements Document (D4.1) specifies that employers will benefit from reliable verification processes and rapid, real-time credential validation during recruitment. The

AEIOU Framework Interview Questionnaire for Employers, included in the Piloting Strategy Document, captures employer perspectives on whether courses align with practical role demands and whether employees demonstrate observable performance improvements post-completion.

The Skills Needs Report (D2.2) confirms describes an employer survey to identify essential competencies for new hires, ensuring that course content addresses genuine workforce needs. Employer engagement will be further developed through roundtable discussions and direct outreach at industry conferences.

Impact on Training Providers

VET providers in Denmark, Iceland, and Spain constitute primary platform users and play a central role in credential issuance. The Platform Requirements Document outlines their needs for seamless credential management, template creation, and batch data export. The User Onboarding Guide (D4.3) provides comprehensive support for integrating the platform into existing institutional workflows.

The Course Framework (D3.1) demonstrates alignment with national regulatory requirements across partner countries while ensuring EQF-level alignment at Levels 2–3. This dual compliance positions the courses for recognition beyond the consortium.

Platform Adoption and Technical Innovation

The Credentials Issuing Online Platform represents a substantive contribution to European digital credential infrastructure. As documented in the Platform Design Document (D4.2), the platform integrates with the European Digital Credentials for Learning (EDC), the European Blockchain Services Infrastructure (EBSI), and Europass, ensuring interoperability with existing EU services. The use of JSON-LD structured data aligned with European Learning Model v3 standards supports cross-border recognition and verification.

The platform adheres to the Council of the European Union's June 2022 Recommendation on micro-credentials, implementing ten key principles including Quality, Transparency, Relevance, Recognition, Portability, and Learner-Centred design. The open-source publication of code libraries supports replicability and adaptation by other institutions.

Policy Relevance

The MCEU project aligns explicitly with multiple EU policy frameworks, including the EU Skills Agenda (Action 4 on VET modernisation), the European Education Area, the

Digital Education Action Plan 2021–2027, and the European Green Deal. The project generates evidence to inform national and EU-level policy on VET and skills development whilst demonstrating practical implementation of the 2022 Council Recommendation.

Engagement with ENIC-NARIC agencies and credentialing bodies is planned as part of Year 2 survey activities, focusing on the practical requirements for formalising micro-credential recognition at national level.

Sustainability and Scalability

The Report on Communication Progress and Results (D6.2) reveals that dissemination activities have significantly underperformed against established KPIs as of December 2024. The shortfalls are substantial across all measured indicators:

Social media engagement stands at 58 LinkedIn followers against a target of 500 (12% achievement), with only 4 posts published against a target of 40 (10% achievement). Website traffic reached 549 active users against a target of 1,000 (55% achievement), with average session duration of 36 seconds against a target of 120 seconds (30% achievement). Only 2 news items have been published against a target of 20 (10% achievement). Newsletter subscriptions are particularly concerning, with just 15 subscribers against a target of 1,500 (1% achievement). Event attendance shows only 2 events attended (OEB 2024 and DigiWind General Assembly) against a target of 6 events per year. No press releases have been published against a target of 4, and no consortium-organised events have taken place against a target of 36.

The consortium has acknowledged these shortfalls. The Second Steering Committee Meeting (January 2025) raised concerns about dissemination metrics, and Access Advisors presented an updated plan. Proposed remediation measures include implementing a content calendar with consistent and interactive content, creating a press kit and collaborating with media partners, establishing a centralised repository for partner documentation, developing clearer event selection processes, mapping relevant stakeholders and scheduling regular meetings, and creating targeted messaging strategies on micro-credentials.

These underperforming indicators present a risk to the project's broader impact objectives. Effective dissemination is essential for achieving the stated goals of raising awareness about micro-credentials, engaging stakeholders, and ensuring uptake beyond the consortium. The low visibility may constrain employer recognition of credentials, limit learner enrolment in pilot activities, and reduce policy influence. The final evaluation should track whether the proposed remediation measures achieve

meaningful improvement in Year 2 and Year 3, and should assess whether dissemination shortfalls have affected pilot recruitment or stakeholder engagement.

The final conference, planned for late 2026, will convene 150–200 in-person attendees and approximately 1,000 online participants, including Members of the European Parliament from the Transport and Tourism Committee. Project results will be uploaded to the Erasmus+ Project Results Platform.

Equity and Inclusion

The project addresses inclusion through multiple channels. The Communication Plan notes that micro-credentials could support inclusion efforts by making education and training accessible to disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. The Skills Needs Report revealed that 25% of unemployed survey respondents were over 45, indicating opportunities for targeted upskilling initiatives for older professionals.

Course design accommodates learners of varying backgrounds and digital literacy levels, with multilingual delivery in English, Danish, Icelandic, and Spanish. The platform's GDPR compliance and learner-controlled data sharing support inclusive access.

6. Conclusions

This evaluation confirms that the MCEU project represents a well-managed, strategically coherent initiative that is making substantial progress toward its stated objectives. Across the fifteen deliverables assessed, the consortium has demonstrated consistent alignment between outputs and the project's overarching goal of developing interoperable micro-credentials for the European hospitality sector. Fourteen deliverables received a "Strong" rating for their contribution to project objectives, reflecting a consortium that has maintained clear focus throughout the implementation phase.

The project's governance and collaboration structures have proved particularly effective. Despite partners not having previously worked together as a consortium, the evidence from both documentary analysis and partner interviews reveals efficient coordination, clear role allocation, and productive working relationships. The Microsoft Teams infrastructure, tiered meeting structure, and risk management processes have provided a robust foundation for cross-border collaboration. The separation of strategic oversight through the Steering Committee from operational implementation through

the Project Management Team has enabled responsive, disciplined decision-making throughout.

The technical and curricular work packages demonstrate notable strength. The skills needs assessment, drawing on 3,810 survey responses from hospitality professionals across 31 countries, provides an empirically grounded foundation for course development. The five micro-credential courses directly address the competency gaps identified by industry stakeholders, whilst the Credentials Issuing Online Platform aligns comprehensively with European Digital Credentials Infrastructure, the European Learning Model, and GDPR requirements. The legal and regulatory foundations underpinning the project—evidenced in deliverables such as the Data Management Plan, Requirements Document, and Platform Design Document—are robust and well-articulated.

The evaluation has also identified areas requiring attention, most notably the significant underperformance against dissemination KPIs during Year 1. Social media engagement, website traffic, newsletter subscriptions, and event attendance all fell substantially below targets. The consortium has acknowledged these shortfalls openly and has developed remediation strategies, which will require close monitoring during Years 2 and 3. Some deliverables also exhibited minor quality issues including grammatical errors and formatting inconsistencies, though these do not materially affect the substance or utility of the outputs.

Looking ahead, the project is well-positioned to deliver meaningful impact across its target stakeholder groups. The piloting phase, now underway with close to 800 learning pathways completed by approximately 200 learners, will generate valuable evidence on learner outcomes, employer recognition, and platform usability. The AEIOU ethnographic framework provides a sound methodology for capturing multi-stakeholder perspectives during this critical phase. The final evaluation should assess whether dissemination improvements materialise, whether the 500-learner target is achieved, and whether the credentials gain traction with employers and recognition bodies beyond the consortium.

In summary, the MCEU project exemplifies effective EU-funded project management: ambitious yet achievable objectives, strong legal and technical foundations, genuine stakeholder orientation, and honest self-assessment where challenges arise. The consortium has built the infrastructure and content necessary to test a credible model for micro-credential implementation in hospitality vocational education, and the coming piloting and dissemination phases will determine the extent to which this potential is realised.

Annex A – Interview Instrument (Project Partners)

Interview Format: Semi-structured; 30–45 minutes

Target: 3–4 key stakeholders (WP leads, platform dev, content leads)

Interview Questions:

Describe your role in the project and main responsibilities.

Which deliverables or outputs were you directly involved in?

How would you assess the quality and usefulness of those outputs?

How has internal coordination worked for your tasks? Any gaps?

What challenges did you face during delivery, and how were they addressed?

Have you seen early signals of impact (e.g., stakeholder interest, reuse)?

What would you do differently if starting over?