D5.1 SKILL'S CERTIFICATION COMPENDIUM

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D5.1 Skill's Certification Compendium

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1. Introduction

Work Package 5 (WP5) focuses on certifying the proficiency sets identified throughout the project, primarily to ensure mutual recognition across European Member States. This objective has two parts: first, to facilitate the certification of skills related to the training and programmes developed; and second, to enable the recognition of skills across borders, ensuring that qualifications and competencies gained in one Member State are acknowledged in others. This process is vital for improving the mobility and employability of individuals in the social economy and beyond.

A key element of Work Package 5 (WP5) is assessing the impact of certification on the recognition of digital and entrepreneurial skills and competencies. This will be conducted within the framework of recognised accreditation models, such as the EIT Label for non-degree education and training. This label is a significant form of recognition, highlighting the quality and relevance of training programmes in areas such as innovation, entrepreneurship and digital transformation. The project will use the results of this assessment to provide insights into the effectiveness of these certifications in increasing the recognition of competencies at national and European levels.

In addition to fostering cross-border recognition, WP5 aims to contribute to the harmonisation of training standards across EU member states. By establishing common benchmarks and criteria for competency certifications, the project will ensure that qualifications within the SE sector meet recognised European standards. This harmonisation process is vital for validating certifications and supporting the sector's overall development. A key indicator of success is **the proportion of Social Economy Organisation (SEO) staff who report improvements in their tools and capabilities** because of recognised training. This measure will be crucial for demonstrating the impact of certification on the effectiveness and capacity building of SE organisations.

WP5's overarching goals are to boost the competitiveness and resilience of SEOs by ensuring that their staff's skills and competencies are recognised and validated at the European level. Achieving these goals will contribute to a more robust and adaptive SE, positioning it as a key player in the broader European economy.

1.1 Purpose of the Report

The **primary purpose** of this report is to explore and establish the various pathways through which digital and entrepreneurial skills can be effectively certified and recognised across Europe. With a focus on the Social Economy (SE), this report seeks to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the different mechanisms available for certifying competencies, ranging from formal qualifications to digital credentials (key definitions of strategic terms are available in Annex 8.1). The objective is also to provide practical guidance on how these certification processes can be integrated with European models and standards. This will ensure that the skills acquired in the context of the SE are recognised and valued across Member States.

A core aspect of this report is to present the state of the art and the overview of progress in harmonising European vocational training systems for adults, which is currently being structured and digitised at an accelerated pace since the Covid pandemic. We will show how we have integrated these parameters into the SETS project.

This report explores several other important certification mechanisms available to individuals and organisations in the Social Economy such as:

- Professional Certifications.
- Accredited Training Programs.
- Industry-recognized Credentials.
- Open Badges.

The report also focuses on ensuring that training and programmes developed within the scope of the project align with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). By adhering to these frameworks, the certifications offered will be comparable across Member States, facilitating the recognition of qualifications and improving the mobility of learners and workers throughout Europe. The EQF serves as a key tool for standardising qualifications at the European level, allowing different qualifications to be compared based on their learning outcomes. Similarly, the ECTS model will ensure that training programmes are structured in a way that is compatible with European credit systems, further enhancing their portability and recognition.

In conclusion, the purpose of this report is to serve as a comprehensive guide to the certification and recognition of digital and entrepreneurial skills. It offers detailed insights into the mechanisms available, the process for achieving recognition, and the ways in which these certifications can contribute to the growth and sustainability of the SME sector across Europe. It facilitates the mutual recognition of competencies across borders by providing the options, standards and criteria needed for certification. By establishing a certification system that aligns with European standards, the project aims to enhance mobility and employability within the EU, particularly in the domains of digital and entrepreneurial skills. This approach will help create a more inclusive and competitive labour market for individuals in the Social Economy.

1.1.1 Context of WP5

WP5's primary objective of certification directly aligns with the European Union's overarching strategy to foster a more inclusive, competitive and resilient workforce. By ensuring that digital and entrepreneurial skills are properly certified, recognised and valued, the project contributes to strengthening the competitiveness of the social economy while supporting the EU's objectives of creating a more sustainable and digital Europe. As certification plays a pivotal role in recognising, validating and valuing the skills that are vital for developing a sustainable and resilient workforce in the social economy, WP5 will establish and promote certification mechanisms that align with European standards and frameworks, ensuring that skills acquired in the SE are recognised in national contexts and contribute to a broader European vision of economic and social progress.

Work Package 5 (WP5) plays a pivotal role in ensuring that the competencies developed through the project are duly acknowledged and accredited, both within the SE and across the broader European context. WP5's **primary focus** is on the certification of digital and entrepreneurial skills, which are becoming increasingly essential for the future of work, particularly in the context of digital transformation. These skills contribute to the sustainability and competitiveness of businesses and play a central role in promoting social innovation and community development within the social economy.

In this context, the certification of skills acquired through vocational training serves as a basic tool for the mobility, recognition and validation of skills at transnational level. The mobility of learners is a fundamental issue in the EU, where workers are increasingly required to be mobile

across borders. For individuals to work in different Member States, their qualifications must be recognised and validated in different contexts. To facilitate the transfer of qualifications and skills between countries, it is essential to implement a robust, transparent and coherent certification system. To achieve this, it is essential that there is genuine transnational cooperation, which is the aim of the SETS project. The project focuses on digital and entrepreneurial skills, tailoring these to the contexts and realities of social economy organisations.

Certification provides a mechanism for the recognition of skills, ensuring that the skills acquired by individuals through non-formal and informal learning pathways are officially recognised. This is particularly important in the SE, where many individuals acquire skills through practical experience in cooperative enterprises, social enterprises or volunteering. While these skills are frequently of great value in professional practice, they are not always formally recognised in existing educational frameworks. WP5 is developing certification mechanisms that take these non-traditional learning pathways into account, with the aim of filling this gap and making it easier for individuals to demonstrate their skills to employers, training providers and other stakeholders. Certification also offers a form of recognition and improves the employability of individuals by clearly signalling their skills to potential employers. It also supports the visibility of the social economy as a key sector contributing to the European economy. By ensuring that the certifications provided under WP5 align with European frameworks such as the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), the report ensures that these skills are positioned in a context that is both comparable and credible across all Member States.

In **SETS process**, WP5 started after WP2, simultaneously collecting data from desk research and interviews with experts in the field (shared in more detail in Expert Consultations and Data Collection). The retroplanning logic for initiating WP5 immediately after WP2 in the SETS project was justified by the complementary and iterative nature of their objectives as evidenced from this report. WP2 focused on mapping needs, profiling training targets, and identifying competence gaps through field-level research and structured engagement with SE stakeholders. This provided the empirical foundation for developing the certification mechanisms in WP5 The retroplanning logic was established in the methodological necessity for WP5 to begin synthesising desk research and consulting experts before the completion of WP3 (training

design). WP5 undertook parallel data collection, including the analysis of European frameworks such as EQF, DigComp, and EntreComp, and consultations with PIX, TOSA, EPALE, and EIT experts to ensure that the certification structures being planned were technically aligned with EU-level referentials and practically validated by practitioners. The activities allowed the results of WP5 to inform WP3's training development process, ensuring that each training course could be pre-aligned with certifiable skill sets and assessment methodologies. Such alignment meant that the certification pathways embedded into the course syllabi (see WP3 outputs) would meet the quality, recognition, and interoperability standards required at national and EU level.

The importance of certification in the social economy sector cannot be overstated, especially as the sector plays a key role in promoting social inclusion, environmental sustainability and equitable economic growth. By empowering people working in this sector to have their skills recognised and valued, WP5 directly contributes to improving their professional development and career opportunities. Certification also enables SE organisations to present their staff's capabilities more effectively and improve their competitiveness in an increasingly complex and digitalised economy. The recognition of skills in the SE is advantageous for both workers and their respective organisations. Standardised and recognised certifications allow SE organisations to attract a highly skilled workforce, gain credibility with stakeholders and improve their operational efficiency. Furthermore, by aligning themselves with European frameworks, these organisations can more easily engage in cross-border collaboration and ensure that their workforce is equipped to meet the challenges of the digital transition.

1.1.2   Methodology of the Report

The methodology used in this report is built on:

1. Desk research and thematic analysis of established European frameworks;
2. Qualitative expert consultations;
3. Inter-rater reliability with project partners.

This approach ensures that the certification mechanisms developed are aligned with recognised standards, are applicable to the diverse contexts of the SE, and can be successfully implemented

across European Member States. The methodology is structured and systematic, involving the selection of relevant sources, the application of key frameworks, and continuous collaboration with project partners who provide expertise and insights specific to the context.

In this document, we will commence with a comprehensive overview of our approach, providing insights into the integration of industry standards and frameworks to streamline the design and certification process for SETS training. We will then proceed to a detailed exposition of the system we have developed and the recommendations we have derived.

2. State Of the Art In 2025: The Adult Education Management System at European Level and Its Structural Elements

2.1 Overview of the Overall European Vocational Training Systems for Adults' System

In a context where professional mobility and the rapid evolution of professions require constant adaptation of skills, the evaluation and recognition of prior learning in vocational training for adults have become major issues on a European scale. In response to these challenges, the European Union has implemented a series of digital tools, common reference frameworks and quality frameworks for the reliable, transparent and interoperable assessment of the skills acquired in continuing education systems.

2.1.1 The Origins and Development of European Qualifications in Adult Vocational Training

The establishment of a European system of certification and referencing of adult vocational training skills began in the 2000s, driven by a political desire to promote mobility, employability and the mutual recognition of qualifications.

The **European Qualifications Framework (EQF)**, adopted in 2008 by *Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council* (2008/C 111/01), marks a milestone. The programme is structured around eight levels based on learning outcomes, enabling national qualifications to be positioned on a common scale and facilitating their transnational comparability. Revised in 2017 (*Recommendation 2017/C 189/03*), it takes greater account of non-formal and informal learning, responding to the needs of lifelong learning.

Simultaneously, the **European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET (EQAVET/CERAQ)**, which was established in 2009 (*Recommendation 2009/C 155/01*), complements this system by standardising quality criteria for training organisations. It

establishes a cycle of continuous improvement (planning, implementation, evaluation), reinforcing the credibility of the qualifications awarded.

The acceleration of digitisation and interoperability in the 2020s post-Covid era. The 2020s will mark a significant turning point with the accelerated digitisation of certification tools. The **Europass portfolio**, which will be modernised in 2020, now includes *European Digital Credentials (EDC)*, a technical infrastructure for delivering interoperable digital qualifications in JSON-LD format. These certificates, which are aligned with **ESCO** (European Skills Classification) and **EQF**, can be instantly verified using electronic signatures (e-Seal) and stored in a secure environment.

In 2022, the *Council Recommendation on micro-certifications* (2022/C 243/02) will broaden the landscape by formalising modular and stackable certificates, adapted to short training courses. These micro-credentials, which are compatible with **ECVET** (transferable credits for VET, launched in 2009), meet the need for flexibility and responsiveness in the face of sectoral change.
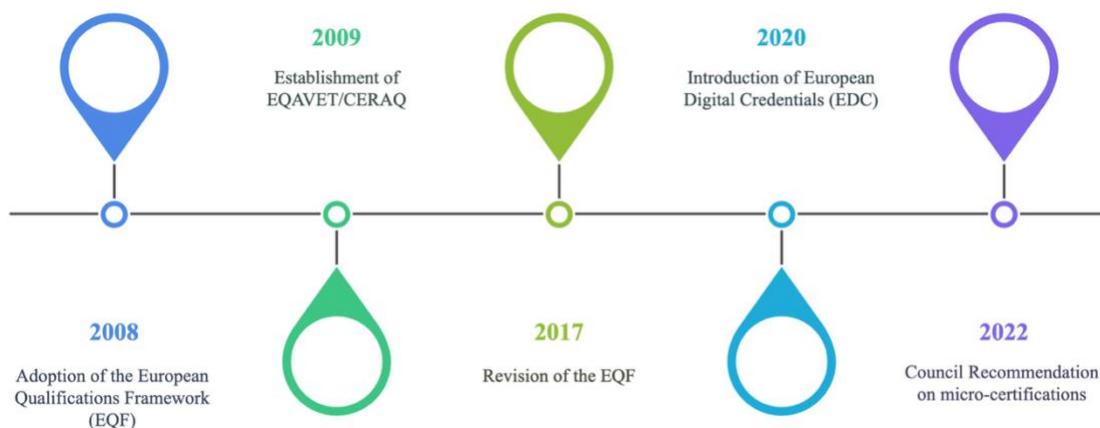
Figure 1. Evolution of European Vocational Training Systems

2.1.2 Digital Benchmarks and Key Skills

The **DigComp** framework, developed in 2013 and updated in 2022 (DigComp 2.2), structures the assessment of digital skills. In France, the **PIX** certification (2019) is an operational version, incorporating online tests and digital badges aligned with the five DigComp domains. The **European Digital Skills Certificate (EDSC)** pilot initiative, running between 2022 and 2024,

explored the feasibility of a pan-European quality label for these skills, although its final report highlighted challenges of cost and adoption.
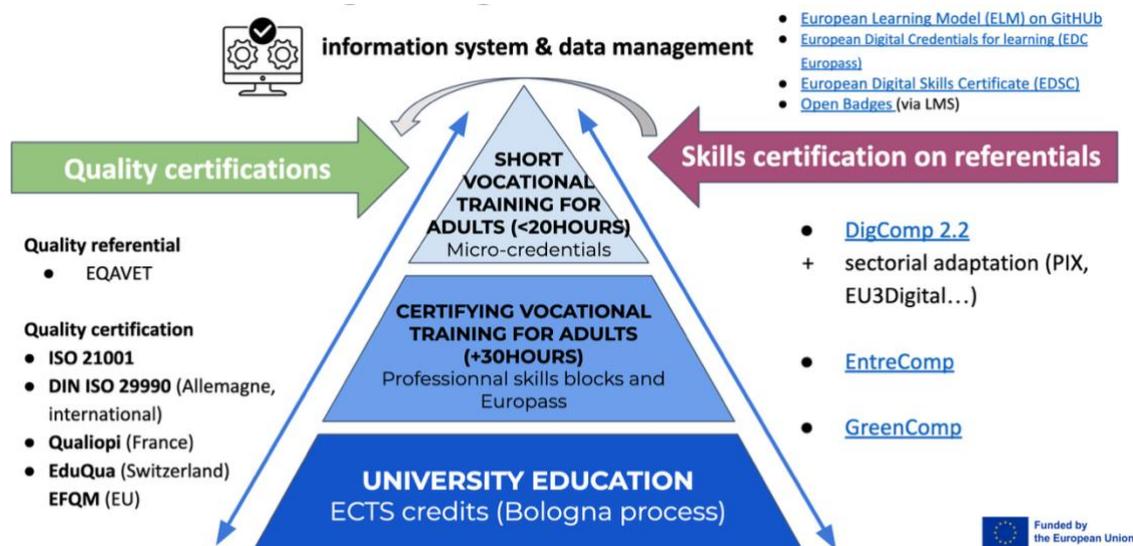
Figure 2. European Certification Systems for Adult Training at a Glance

As described by the scheme, today, the European system is based on a combination of:

1. **CEC/EQF** for referencing qualification levels ;
2. **EQAVET** for quality assurance;
3. **EDC** and **Europass** for dematerialisation and portability ;
4. **DigComp** and **ESCO** for framing digital and sector-specific skills.

These systems facilitate the validation of learning outcomes, as well as their portability and transnational recognition, thanks to the integration of standards such as DigComp, Europass Digital Credentials and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF/CEC). At the same time, the quality assurance for training organisations and the qualifications they deliver is guaranteed by European standards such as EQAVET and national labels that are aligned with EU requirements. This coherent architecture aims to strengthen the confidence of learners, employers and institutions in the value of certified skills, while supporting mobility and professional inclusion throughout the European Union. Member countries, such as France with the **RNCP** and **Qualiopi**, are adapting these frameworks while preserving their specific national characteristics. However, disparities remain, particularly in the adoption of micro-certifications and the harmonisation of quality audits. The future *European Skills Strategy 2026* plans to strengthen interoperability via the **European Learning Model (ELM)** and to extend the use of

Open Badges, which have already been tested in projects such as **EU3Digital**. This ongoing development aims to make the EU an integrated, agile and resilient vocational training area in the face of the digital and ecological transitions.

Figure 3. Comparison of Tools and Reference Systems

Sources :

- AEFA Guide to cross-curricular skills for modular assessment.
- CEDEFOP 2023 report on micro-certifications and quality assurance .

3. Reference Frameworks and Certification Principles in the European Learning Management System

The certification of competences is a cornerstone of ensuring that skills are recognised, validated, and valued across different Member States, particularly within the context of the Social Economy. To achieve this, it is crucial to align with established European reference frameworks that ensure comparability, transparency, and mutual recognition of qualifications. This section presents the key frameworks and principles that guide the certification process for competencies developed within the project. By following these established models, the goal is to establish a consistent, reliable, and easily accessible certification system that meets the needs of individuals and organisations in the SE, while also encouraging mobility and professional development across borders.

3.1 Quality and Harmonisation Principles: European Certification Systems for the Quality of Continuing Education

The introduction of quality qualifications that are valid at European level for adult education is part of the European Union's objective of ensuring transparency, comparability and mutual recognition of qualifications across its Member States. The development of certification mechanisms within the project is guided by several quality and harmonisation principles. These principles frame European digital and entrepreneurial skills qualifications with quality assurance principles. These measures guarantee consistency, fairness and transparency in the recognition of competencies. As outlined below, we provide the principles that are crucial for the credibility of certification systems.

Two major frameworks structure this approach: the **European Qualifications Framework (EQF)** and the **European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET).** The two frameworks are complementary: the CEC/EQF

structures the recognition of qualifications, while the CERAQ/EQAVET guarantees the quality of the training courses that deliver these qualifications.

- The EQF is a reference framework for positioning and comparing qualifications at European level, focusing on learning outcomes and the transparency of qualification levels.
- The CERAQ/EQAVET is a quality assurance framework for vocational training (VET), the aim of which is to guarantee and improve the quality of training systems, particularly in the field of continuing education, using common indicators and processes.

The EQF, adopted in 2008 and revised in 2017, aims to establish a common reference framework at eight levels based on learning outcomes, making national qualifications more comprehensible and comparable, and supporting the cross-border mobility of learners and workers. It applies to all types of education, training and certification, and promotes lifelong learning as well as the validation of non-formal and informal learning. **The European Qualifications Framework (EQF)** is a system that enables the comparison of qualifications from different countries and institutions. It is based on an 8-level structure that is divided into three categories: knowledge, skills, and autonomy and responsibility. The EQF promotes transparency, comparability, and recognition across Europe, helping qualifications be understood across Member States and enhancing mobility and employability.

The EQF places a greater emphasis on the learning outcomes of education and training, as opposed to the duration of such programmes. It highlights the competencies that learners acquire and the knowledge they gain by the conclusion of their training. This approach is designed to ensure that all forms of learning—formal, non-formal, and informal—are recognised and valued. The programme is structured around several key principles and guarantees:

- **Transparency and Comparability**: The EQF facilitates the comparison of qualifications across countries and education systems by using clear descriptors for knowledge, skills, autonomy and responsibility. This will help employers and institutions to better assess the value of qualifications obtained abroad and simplify the recognition process across borders.

- **Focus on Learning Outcomes**: Instead of focusing on the duration or nature of the training, the EQF assesses the specific competencies that learners acquire, thereby ensuring that the quality of continuing education is evaluated based on skills and knowledge. This facilitates the recognition of competencies from diverse learning environments, enhancing the transferability of skills.

- **Link with National Frameworks**: Each country must align its national qualifications system with the EQF, ensuring that qualifications meet European standards and can be compared across the EU. This alignment helps to increase confidence in the qualifications, enabling their recognition and integration within European labour markets and education systems.

- **Promoting Mobility and Progression**: By aligning the description of qualification levels, the EQF facilitates the mobility of individuals across countries, enhancing access to employment and further education opportunities. It facilitates lifelong learning by recognising qualifications gained throughout one's career and by preventing duplication of learning when changing countries.

The EQF operates in synergy with other European tools such as **Europass**, **ECTS**, and **ECVET**, helping to remove barriers related to the transparency of qualifications and supporting mutual recognition. The alignment of national frameworks to the EQF ensures consistency in how qualifications are positioned across Europe, contributing to a more integrated and efficient European educational landscape.

Furthermore, CERAQ/EQAVET, adopted in 2009, sets out a framework for quality assurance in vocational training, based on a continuous improvement cycle (planning, implementation, evaluation, revision) and common (EQAVET, 2014). It assists Member States in developing and monitoring the continuous improvement of their systems, without imposing a single model, but offering a "toolbox" that can be adapted to specific national circumstances. The implementation of these frameworks is based on the following documents: the recommendations of the European Parliament and the Council, a progressive timetable for aligning national systems since 2008-2009, and interoperability ensured by the correspondence of certification levels and the integration of common quality criteria. These measures are designed to reinforce mutual trust and professional mobility on a European (EQAVET, 2014).

With these frameworks, we identified a few challenges for the SETS project

- **Interoperability**: Aligning qualifications with the EQF ensures that they are legible and recognised in all European countries, which is essential for the transnational pathways in the SETS project.
- **Quality**: The EQAVET/CERAQ requirements for training programmes and organisations guarantee the quality, transparency and continuous improvement of the programmes offered, reinforcing the credibility of the certifications awarded in the SETS project.
- **Synergy**: The link between the two frameworks ensures both the comparability of qualifications and confidence in the quality of training, two pillars of the success of an innovative European project like SETS.

Below we showcase a visualised comparison of the European Frameworks for Education (*Figure 4*). However, we provide a detailed comparison in Appendix 4: Comparative Table of European Training Quality Certification Systems.
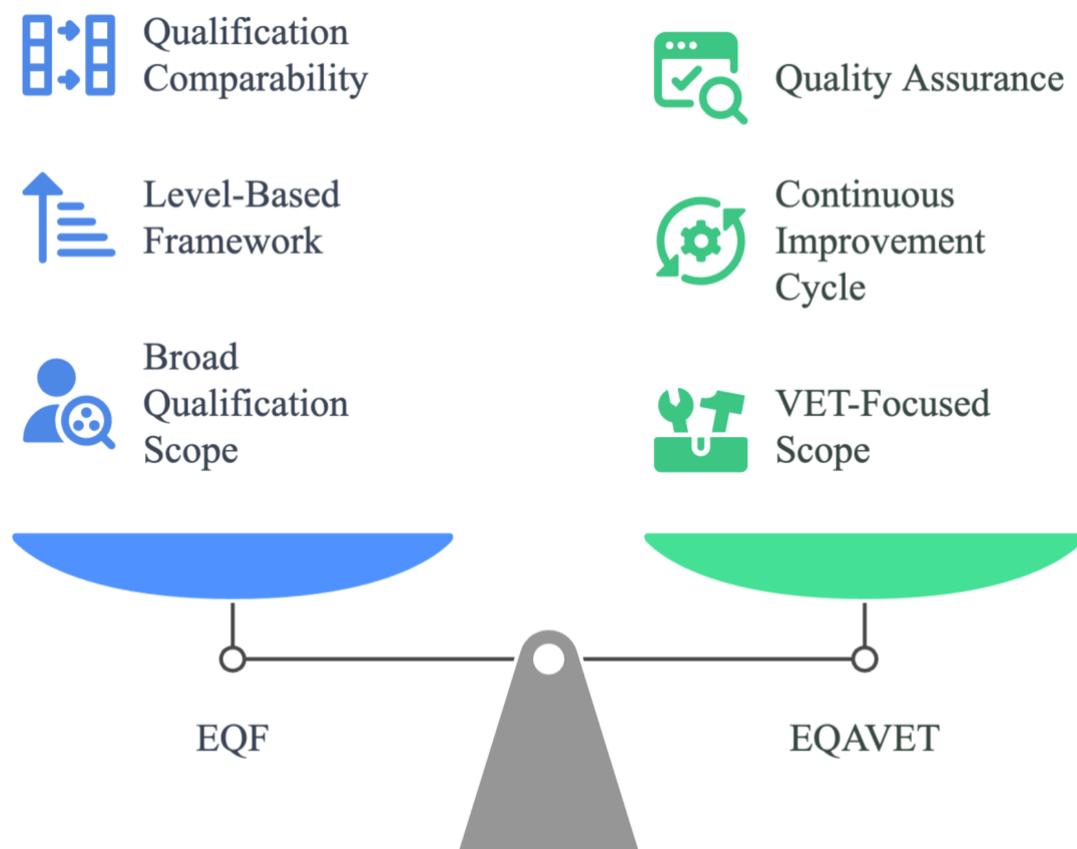
Figure 4. Comparison European Frameworks for Education
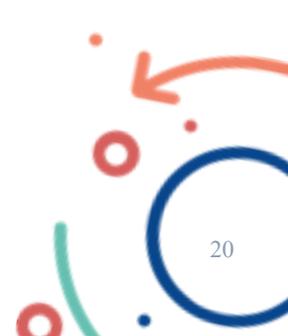
3.1.1 Quality Assessment with European Recognition

The assessment of the quality of vocational education and training with European recognition is a key issue in ensuring that learners, employers and institutions have confidence in the value of qualifications awarded throughout the European Union. This approach is based on established frameworks and references, such as the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET), which proposes a cycle of continuous improvement based on the planning, implementation, evaluation and revision of training schemes.

Quality criteria and indicators, which are widely disseminated and harmonised, make it possible not only to compare national systems, but also to ensure the transparency and readability of qualifications on a transnational scale. At the same time, quality labels and certifications - such as Qualiopi in France, eduQua in Switzerland and ISO standards - reinforce this dynamic by imposing rigorous requirements in terms of management, teaching organisation and continuous improvement. Finally, European recognition of assessment agencies and accreditation processes, based on ESG (European Standards and Guidelines) standards, guarantees the independence, reliability and comparability of quality approaches, paving the way for greater learner mobility and better matching of training to the needs of the European labour market. A concrete example is the VAL.U.E C.H.A.IN project (Ministry of National Education, Higher Education and Research, 2023) which assesses the digital skills of low-skilled adults via personalised pathways combining **DigComp**, **ECVET** (transferable credits) and **CléA numérique** certification (Ministry of National Education, Higher Education and Research, 2023).

Figure 5. Certifications, Quality Labels, and Audit and Accreditation Tools

3.1.2 Private Quality Label for European Trainings: EIT Label

The **EIT Label for non-degree education** is a prestigious recognition awarded to high-quality training programmes that focus on innovation, entrepreneurship, and the development of digital and entrepreneurial skills. The EIT Label ensures that the training programmes adhere to strict quality criteria and demonstrate their impact in fostering entrepreneurial skills and addressing societal challenges. The project initially aimed to apply for the EIT Label but was unable to meet the requirements within the timeframe of the project. The primary reason for this was the lack of available calls for new partnerships or opportunities to associate with relevant Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) during the project period. Additionally, the complexity of the application process and the need for substantial documentation and evidence were challenging. Despite this, the training programmes developed throughout the project align with the criteria set by the EIT Label, ensuring that they meet European standards for innovation, entrepreneurship, and sustainability. These programmes are designed to equip individuals with the skills needed to drive innovation in the digital and entrepreneurial sectors, making them highly relevant to the goals of the European Union.

Each of these certification mechanisms plays a critical role in ensuring that the competencies acquired within the Social Economy are recognised, validated, and transferable across borders. By providing formal recognition of skills, these mechanisms enhance the employability of individuals and contribute to the overall development and resilience of the SE sector. These certifications also ensure that the skills developed in the SE align with European standards, supporting greater mobility, social inclusion, and economic growth across the EU.
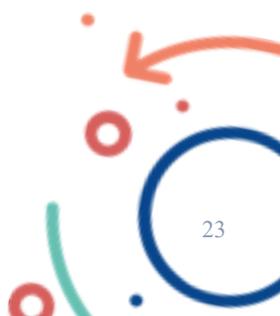
4. Relevant European Skills Referential for the SETS Project

4.1 Digital and Entrepreneurial Skills

The primary sources for this methodology are key European skills referential and frameworks that guide the certification, recognition, and validation of competences. These sources provide a structured and universally accepted approach to skill development and certification, ensuring that the competencies developed within the project are aligned with European standards.

4.1.1 Digital Skills

- **European DigComp framework**: DigComp (Digital Competence Framework for Citizens) is a European framework that defines the essential digital competences needed for active participation in society and the labour market. It describes the digital competences required to work, learn and interact in a digitalised world. As digitalisation plays a central role in the transformation of the SE, the DigComp framework has been used to ensure that the green and digital skills developed within the project are recognised in line with European digital standards. The framework includes areas such as information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, digital content creation and problem solving, all of which are essential for SE workers to succeed in an increasingly digital environment.

  DigComp identifies five key competence areas:
  - **Information and Data Literacy**: The ability to search, manage, evaluate, and use data and information effectively. This includes competences such as data analysis, information retrieval, and understanding digital privacy and security.
  - **Communication and Collaboration:** The ability to communicate, collaborate, and participate in digital networks, both for personal and professional purposes. This includes using digital tools to collaborate in teams, manage projects, and engage with stakeholders online.
  - **Digital Content Creation:** The ability to create and edit digital content, including text, images, and multimedia. This competence is essential for

producing engaging and informative content for social campaigns, digital platforms, or community-driven projects.

- o **Safety:** The ability to protect personal data, manage digital security risks, and understand ethical and legal issues related to digital content and online activities.

- o **Problem Solving:** The ability to use digital technologies to solve problems and make decisions. This includes using digital tools to find solutions to complex issues, automate process, or innovate within the social economy.

- **DigComp certification**: Allows you to officially validate your digital skills according to this reference framework, with tests and certifications offered by accredited organisations.

4.1.2 Other Identified Skills Referential on Digital Skills

- **Pilot project for a European e-skills certificate**: In 2023, the EU launched a pilot project for a single European certificate, aimed at harmonising the recognition of e-skills in all Member States, with roll-out planned from 2024.This was not enough uptaded to be uses for SETS Project.

- **EITCA/EITC**: European IT certification programmes, delivered online, covering areas such as cybersecurity, cloud, data science, etc. These certifications are recognised in many countries and companies.

4.1.3 Entrepreneurial Skills

- **EntreComp (Entrepreneurship Competence Framework):** EntreComp is a European framework that defines the competence of entrepreneurship. It outlines the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for individuals to actively participate in entrepreneurial activities, including social entrepreneurship. The framework is particularly relevant to the SE because it emphasises values such as social impact, community involvement, and sustainable business models (European Commission, nd). By using EntreComp, the report ensures that competencies related to social entrepreneurship and innovation are appropriately recognised and validated.EntreComp (Entrepreneurship Competence Framework) provides a detailed breakdown of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to engage in entrepreneurial activities. The
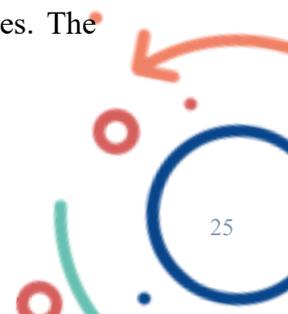
competencies identified within EntreComp are vital for individuals working in the SE, where entrepreneurship often revolves around creating social value, promoting sustainable practices, and fostering collaboration. The competencies from EntreComp are mapped into three main areas:

- o **Ideas and Opportunities:** This area includes competencies related to identifying, exploring, and evaluating opportunities for innovation and social impact. It involves creativity, critical thinking, and the ability to recognise unmet needs in the community or market.

- o **Resources:** This area covers competencies related to mobilising the necessary resources, both financial and human, to turn ideas into reality. It includes skills such as project management, team leadership, and resource mobilisation.

- o **Into Action:** This area focuses on putting ideas into practice and achieving sustainable impact. It encompasses competencies related to organisational management, risk-taking, and market engagement, as well as the ability to adapt and innovate in response to changing circumstances.

4.1.4 Other Identified Skills Referential on Entrepreneurial Skills

- **Skill Pass (ESP):** European certificate attesting to the entrepreneurial skills acquired during mini-enterprise programmes. It is recognised by organisations and employers throughout Europe.

- **National and sectoral certifications**: In France, for example, organisations such as BGE deliver entrepreneurial certifications registered with the Répertoire spécifique, covering creation, management, digital visibility and sales for entrepreneurs.

4.2 European Learning Management System and Progress Towards Interoperability

4.2.1 Overview of Certification Mechanisms

This section provides a structured overview of the various certification mechanisms used to validate and recognise competencies developed within the Social Economy (SE). These

certification mechanisms play an essential role in ensuring that the competencies acquired through training programmes are recognised across Europe, facilitating mobility and enhancing the employability of individuals working within the SE. The key mechanisms covered in this section include professional certifications, accredited training programmes, industry-recognised credentials, open digital badges, recognition of prior learning (RPL), and the EIT Label for non-degree education and training. Each of these mechanisms is described in detail, outlining how they contribute to the recognition and validation of competencies.

Professional certifications are formal credentials awarded to individuals who meet specific standards within a particular field of work. These certifications are typically issued by recognised bodies, such as industry associations or governmental agencies, and serve to validate an individual's competence in each area. The assessment methods for professional certifications generally comprise written exams, practical tests, or case studies that evaluate theoretical knowledge and practical skills. These certifications are frequently recognised at both national and EU levels, ensuring that individuals with professional certifications can demonstrate their qualifications and expertise across Member States.

Accredited training programmes are structured educational courses that provide individuals with the necessary knowledge and skills in specific areas, such as digital and entrepreneurial fields. These programmes can range from short courses to full degrees, and they are validated by accrediting bodies that assess the quality of the course content, delivery, and learning outcomes. Accreditation ensures that the training provided meets established standards and provides individuals with recognised qualifications. These training programmes are often aligned with European frameworks such as the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), which makes them compatible with other education systems across Europe and enhances their portability.

Industry-recognised credentials are certifications awarded by well-known industry leaders or platforms, such as Microsoft, Google, and other major technology companies. These credentials are highly valued in sectors that require specific technical expertise and are often recognised across borders. For example, certifications like the Microsoft Office Specialist or Google Analytics certification validate an individual's proficiency in software tools or digital platforms. These industry credentials provide a flexible way to recognise competencies that are

highly relevant in the digital economy, and they are often obtained by completing online courses followed by an exam.

Open digital badges are a form of micro-credential that recognise specific skills or achievements. These badges can be awarded for completing a training module, demonstrating proficiency in a skill, or achieving a milestone in a learning path. Unlike traditional certificates or diplomas, open badges are digital and contain metadata that verifies the skill acquired, the issuing organisation, and the criteria for earning the badge. Open badges provide a portable, flexible, and verifiable way to recognise competencies in both formal and informal learning settings. They can be shared across digital platforms, such as LinkedIn or personal portfolios, enhancing the visibility of an individual's skills and achievements.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a process that allows individuals to have their prior knowledge and skills formally recognised, regardless of how those competencies were acquired. This recognition is based on evidence from previous work experience, life experiences, or informal learning activities. The RPL process involves submitting a portfolio that documents the skills and knowledge gained through these experiences, which is then assessed against the learning outcomes required for a specific qualification. This process ensures that individuals who may not have formal educational qualifications still have their skills validated and recognised, increasing their chances of gaining employment or pursuing further training.

4.2.2 Digital and Interoperable Skills Assessment

Digital, interoperable skills assessment is now a central pillar of vocational training and lifelong learning in Europe.

Thanks to the widespread use of online platforms such as PIX, which is based on the European DigComp reference framework, it is now possible to accurately and objectively measure the mastery of essential digital skills among adults in continuing education, students and professionals (European Commission, 2022).

These tools can be used not only to assess technical skills, but also to issue state-recognised qualifications that can be integrated into secure digital portfolios such as Europass. Interoperability, supported by recent European regulations, ensures that assessment results and

certifications are understandable and transferable from one country to another, facilitating professional mobility and the mutual recognition of qualifications.

This integrated approach responds to the challenges of transparency, traceability and educational innovation, while offering each learner the opportunity to develop their skills and build a coherent career path on a European scale.

Characteristic	EDC Europass	EDSC	Digital Self-Assessment	Digital Badges	Digital Portfolios
Type	Technical infrastructure	Certification	Self-assessment tool	Granular certificates	Validation tool
Focus	Digital qualifications	Digital skills	Digital skills	Specific skills	Professional experience
Standard	ESCO, EQF	DigComp 2.2	DigComp	Open Badges	CEDEFOP guidelines
Functionality	Issuing, storing, verifying	Assessing, harmonising	Testing, reporting	Recognising, displaying	Validating, showcasing
Compatibility	Compatible with Open Badges	N/A	N/A	Compatible with EDC	N/A

Figure 6. Digital Skills Recognition Tools and Methodologies

Tools and infrastructure	Methodologies
• The European Digital Credentials for learning (EDC Europass, nd) is a European technical infrastructure for issuing, storing and verifying digital qualifications (diplomas, micro-certifications, badges) via a standardised format (JSON-LD) aligned with **ESCO** (European skills classification) and **EQF**. Example: A French RNCP qualification converted to EDC is automatically recognised in Germany via Europass.	• **Digital badges** are granular certificates (e.g. "Agile Project Management") issued via **Open Badges**, compatible with EDC and readable throughout the EU (DIGITALEUROPE, 2023). • **Non-formal learning can also be recognised through** the use of digital portfolios (e.g. **Europass**) to validate professional experience, in accordance with **CEDEFOP** guidelines (Cedefop, n.d.).

• **European Digital Skills Certificate (EDSC)** is a certification based on **DigComp 2.2**, currently under development, to harmonise the assessment of digital skills (levels A1 to C2) (European Commission, 2024). • **Digital self-assessment**: the Europass platform offers a digital skills test aligned with DigComp, generating a report stored in the digital portfolio (Europass, 2024).	

Table 1. Tools, Infrastractures and methodologies for certification

EU recognised online skills certification providers

In 2025, with the growing development of Learning Management Systems that enable the management of data, the production and management of teaching tools, and the monitoring of learners and their assessment of skills acquisition, online certifications have become essential, sometimes even required by official quality accreditation bodies such as Qualiopi in France.

Online skills certifications play a central role in promoting digital and professional expertise. They enable everyone, regardless of their background, to have their skills officially recognised, improve their employability and position themselves in the job market. Among the most recognised organisations and schemes are the Pix certification, the TOSA certification and MOOC certifications.

Pix certification

Pix certification is a French public scheme, recognised by the State and the professional world, which aims to assess and certify the digital skills of lifelong learners. Replacing the B2i and C2i, Pix is aimed at school pupils, students, continuing education trainees, and anyone in employment who wishes to enhance their digital skills. The platform offers a self-assessment of 16 skills divided into five main areas: information and data, communication and collaboration, content creation, protection and security, and the digital environment. The assessment is carried out online, via interactive exercises and multiple-choice questions, and
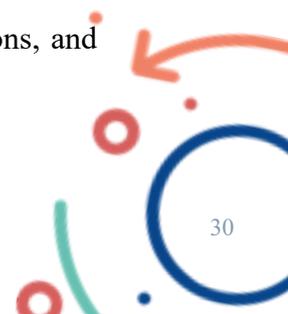
leads to an official certification, issued after a supervised exam at an approved centre or remotely. This certification is free for school and university students, and subject to a fee for independent candidates. It is listed in the France Compétences specific directory and is gaining international recognition, particularly through collaborations with institutions such as UNESCO and the World Bank. In the labour market, Pix certification is a differentiating asset, attesting to mastery of the digital tools and practices that are essential in all sectors of activity (PIX, nd).

TOSA certification

TOSA (Test On Software Applications) certification is an international standard for assessing and certifying IT and office skills, recognised in more than 27 countries and widely acclaimed by businesses and human resources departments. It is aimed at a very wide audience: employees, students, job seekers, or anyone wishing to enhance their skills in software such as Excel, Word, PowerPoint, Outlook, Photoshop, or programming languages such as Python and Java. The TOSA test is adaptive and takes place online or in person, under supervision, with a score out of 1,000 that ranks the candidate's level from beginner to expert. There is no concept of failure: the score obtained is immediately communicated and can be displayed on a CV or LinkedIn profile, certifying a precise and verifiable level. TOSA certification is listed in the France Compétences Specific Directory and is eligible for the Compte Personnel de Formation (CPF) personal training account, which facilitates access and funding. For companies, it is a talent management and skills mapping tool, while strengthening the credibility of candidates in the job market (TOSA, nd).

4.2.3 Assessment Guidelines and Indicators

The identification and rigorous assessment of skills acquired in vocational training are based on common reference frameworks and indicators, which form the backbone of European certification systems. These frameworks, such as the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), the DigComp reference framework for digital skills, the EntreCOMP reference framework for entrepreneurial skills, and the ESCO classification, make it possible to structure learning, define levels of proficiency and guarantee the comparability of results on a transnational scale.

At the same time, evaluation indicators, derived in particular from the work of CEDEFOP and the EQAVET framework, provide concrete tools for measuring the quality of systems, the effectiveness of training and the match between skills and the needs of the labour market. The use of these reference systems and indicators ensures the transparency, reliability and interoperability of qualifications, while supporting mobility and the recognition of professional qualifications throughout the European Union.

Frame of reference	Sources of indicators
• **DigComp**: European reference framework for digital skills (5 domains, 21 skills), used to structure assessments (e.g. PIX certification in France) (European Commission, Joint Research Centre, n.d.). • **ESCO**: Multilingual database standardising skills, professions and qualifications, integrated with Europass for interoperability (European Commission, n.d.). • **EQF**: 8-level framework for positioning national qualifications on a European scale (e.g. RNCP level 5 = EQF level 4) (CEDEFOP, 2021).	• **CEDEFOP** proposes quality indicators for VET (e.g. post-training integration rates, matching skills to occupations) CEDEFOP, 2021). • **EQAVET** defines 14 key indicators (e.g. learner satisfaction, employability) for evaluating training systems (European Commission, Joint Research Centre, n.d.). • **The European Skills Index (ESI**) measures the effectiveness of training systems using comparative data (skills, labour market) Cedefop, n.d.).
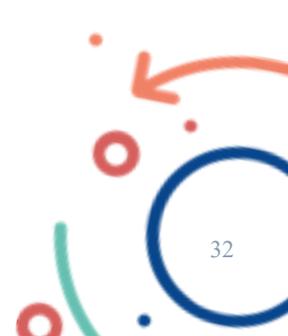
5. Levels of European Skills Certification: Specific Features and Their Interactions

In a European context marked by the growing mobility of learners and professionals, the recognition and enhancement of skills acquired throughout life have become major challenges for education, training and employability. To meet these challenges, the European Union has progressively structured a coherent landscape of skills qualifications, based on three complementary levels: the ECTS system for higher education, transferable vocational qualifications via national frameworks and Europass, and micro-certifications for short and modular learning. Each of these systems is based on specific European reference frameworks and tools, guaranteeing the comparability, transparency and interoperability of qualifications on a transnational scale. This architecture not only supports academic and professional mobility but also encourages pedagogical innovation and rapid adaptation to the emerging needs of the labour market, as shown by the gradual integration of micro-certifications and digital skills into continuing training courses. The cop

Complementarity and challenges

- **Stacking**: Micro-certifications could be added to the RNCP via the Répertoire spécifique, but their sectoral recognition remains limited.
- **Quality assurance**: Professional certifications follow **CERAQ/EQAVET**, while micro-certifications depend on local or private initiatives (Orr, Pupinis, & Kirdulytė, 2020).

5.1 Key Points for the SETS Project

- **Interoperability**: The three systems are built around European reference systems (EQF, Europass, DigComp), ensuring the portability of skills and qualifications within SETS.
- **Complementarity**: SETS can combine ECTS modules (for academic anchoring), professional qualifications (for professional recognition) and micro-certifications (for flexibility and innovation).

- **Timetable**: The gradual integration of micro-certifications and European digital tools (Europass Digital Credentials) will enable SETS to align itself with the latest regulatory developments and guarantee transnational recognition of its courses.
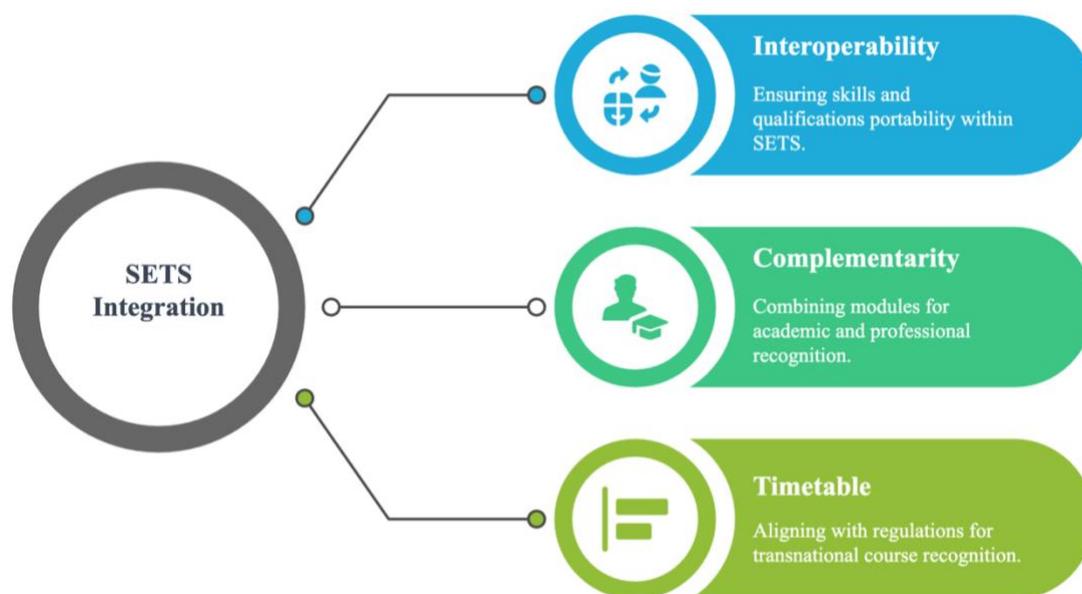
Figure 7. SETS' Multifaceted Approach

Sources used

- Bologna Process (1999), Diploma Supplement
- Council Recommendation on the EQF (2008, 2017)
- EU Recommendation 2022/C 243/02 on micro-certifications
- Europass, DigComp, MICROBOL (2021)

5.2 Focus on Microcertifications / Microcredentials

European micro-certifications were born out of the need to adapt training systems to the rapidly changing skills required on the labour market and to the diversification of learner profiles. They have their origins in the *European Skills Strategy* (2020), which identifies short, modular training as an essential lever for promoting lifelong learning and professional inclusion, particularly for vulnerable groups or those undergoing retraining. The aim of these schemes is to certify specific skills acquired outside long courses, and to facilitate professional mobility and employability on a European scale. The founding texts are the *Council Recommendation of*

16 June 2022 on a European approach to micro-certifications for lifelong learning and employability (2022/C 243/02), and the European Commission's *Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027*, which provides for the creation of a European Digital Skills Certificate (EDSC) and the integration of micro-certifications into the European Education Area.

The implementation timetable envisages adoption of the framework in 2022, gradual deployment in the Member States from 2023 via the Europass Digital Credentials infrastructure, full integration by 2025 and transnational evaluation in 2027.

The scope of micro-certifications is broad: they cover all sectors (digital, health, ecological transition, etc.), are issued by universities, vocational training bodies and businesses, and are designed to be stackable and recognised in different national and European contexts.

Their interoperability is based on the *European Learning Model* (ELM, see below), which guarantees the harmonisation of metadata (EQF levels, learning outcomes, ESCO skills), and on the Europass technical infrastructure, which enables the secure storage, verification and portability of certificates. European micro-certifications thus constitute

In this way, the European Union, the EDC and the EDSC form a coherent ecosystem, an innovative and flexible tool for meeting the challenges of lifelong learning and the recognition of skills on a transnational scale. The technical infrastructure (EDC) enables EDSCs to be deployed at operational level.

The European Learning Model (ELM) on GitHUb

The European Learning Model (ELM) is a Data Model for Interoperability of Learning Opportunities, Qualifications, Accreditation and Credentials in Europe, developed by the European Commission.

The European Learning Model aims to capture the results of any non-formal and formal learning across Europe, as well as the validation of non-formal and informal learning. It is designed to provide a single format to describe certificates of attendance, examination results, degrees and diplomas, diploma supplements, professional certifications, employer recommendations and any other kind of claims that are related to learning.

This data model is in use by the European Digital Credentials Infrastructure (EDCI) and the Qualifications Dataset Register (QDR). The EDCI is a set of tools, services and software to

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support the issuance of authentic, tamper-evident digital credentials (such as qualifications and other learning achievements) across Europe. The EDCI has been developed as part of an ongoing work to implement the new Europass Framework for supporting transparency and verifiability of citizens' skills and qualifications in Europe. The QDR is a register for publishing qualifications and learning opportunities in order to have these searchable on the Europass platform.

Characteristic	European Digital Credentials	European Digital Skills Certificate
Domain	All learning types	Specific numerical skills
Terms of reference	ELM, ESCO, EQF, Europass	DigComp 2.1/2.2
Function	Infrastructure for certification	Sector quality label
Governance	Europass (European Commission)	JRC-led consortium
Maturity	Deployed since 2020	Pilot phase (2022-2024)
Application timetable	2019-2023: Development & Integration	2022-2025: Study and refinement
Reference texts	Europass Recommendation, EDCI Documentation	Digital Education Action Plan, JRC Report
Interoperability	JSON-LD, W3C, EBSI, ESCO/EQF	DigComp alignment, planned link with Europass
Complementarities	Hosts EDSC certifications, verifies accreditation	Uses EDC infrastructure, enriches Europass

Figure 8. Comparisson EDC and EDSC

These two systems share 3 types of complementarities:

Technical. The EDSC could use the EDC infrastructure to:

- o **Issue certificates** via the *EDC*.
- o **Automatic verification of** the accreditation of certification.
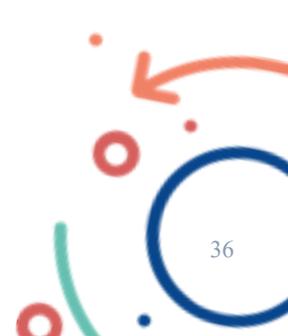
Pedagogical. EDSC micro-certifications can be integrated into broader EDC pathways (e.g. combining digital skills and management in a Europass CV).

Policy. Both systems contribute to the European skills strategy:

- o EDC → Mobility and transnational recognition19.
- o EDSC → Reduction of the digital deficit identified in the *Digital Education Action Plan*.

Two challenges can be identified:

- **EDC**: uneven uptake by country (strong in Southern Europe, limited in Eastern Europe).
- **EDSC**: Risk of overlap with existing certifications (e.g. ECDL).

5.3 Strategic Links with the SETS Project

1. **Enhanced interoperability** :
   - o Use the EDC as the technical backbone for storing and sharing certifications issued in SETS, guaranteeing their transnational recognition.
   - o Integrate EDSC micro-certifications into SETS training courses, using DigComp to map critical digital skills.
2. **Governance and quality** :
   - o Adopt the EDSC label for EESS digital modules, reinforcing their alignment with European standards.
   - o Use EQAVET indicators (CERAQ) to audit the quality of training courses, combined with EDC metadata for transparency.
3. **Cost reduction** :
   - o Capitalise on existing EDC infrastructure to avoid costly technical developments.
   - o Benefit from feedback from the EDSC study to prioritise high-impact digital skills.

Additional sources used:

- *CEDEFOP (2021*) on the EQF/ESCO1 link.

- *MICROBOL report (2021)* on the integration of micro-certifications into nationa (Cirlan, 2023).
- *DIGITALEUROPE recommendations (2023)* for the interoperability of digital (Digital Europe, nd).

Criteria/ Countries->	France	Italy	Belgium (FR)	Slovenia
0 *Certificate Title*	EX. Electricien d'équipement	Ex. Diploma di Istruzione Tecnica - Biotechnologies	Ex. Magasinier	Ex. Bolničar Negovalec
1 *Translated Title*	Equipment electrician (EN)	Healthcare Biotechnologies (EN)	Warehouse operator (EN)	Nursing assistant (EN)
2 *Skills/Competencies*	Circuit design, domestic electrical installations, safety checks, etc.	Data analysis, chemical processes, laboratory management, etc.	Stock management, customer interaction, safety equipment handling, etc.	Patient care, infection control, elderly care, etc.
3 *Access to Employment*	Industries, maintenance, hospitals, etc.	Chemical and biotech industries, labs, etc.	Public/private warehouses	Hospitals, elderly care facilities
4 *Legal Basis*	CNCP (France) - www.cncp.gouv.fr	Ministry of Education - www.istruzione.it	FOREM - www.leforem.be	Ministry of Education, Science and Sport - www.mizs.gov.si
5 *Education Level (EQF)*	EQF Level 4	EQF Level 4	EQF Level 4	EQF Level 4
6 *Grading System*	Scale 10/20 with honors	Scale 60/100 with honors	Binary: 'satisfied/not satisfied'	Scale 2-5, 5 being excellent
7 *Access to Further Education*	Next educational level within France/EU agreements	Higher Technical Institutes or Universities	EQF Level 5	Advanced vocational/technical programs

8	Mode of Certification	School-based training (82%) + Practical (18%)	School-based (80%) + Apprenticeship (20%)	School-based (80%) + Professional experience (20%)	Standard curriculum, credits-based system
9	National Europass Center	www.agence-erasmus.fr/page/europass	www.anpal.gov.it/europa/europass	www.moneuropass.be	www.europass.si

Table 2.Comparative System and Europass Interoperability

5.3.1 Adaptations for Social Economy Organisations

While the certification systems in France, Italy, Slovenia, and Belgium provide strong foundations for recognising competencies, the SE sector requires additional adaptations to ensure that the unique competencies developed within this sector are validated and recognised. These adaptations should focus on social entrepreneurship, community-driven innovation, and the green economy, ensuring that training programmes cater to the specific needs of social enterprises, cooperatives, and other organisations operating within the SE.

Furthermore, there is a need for better integration of non-formal and informal learning pathways in the recognition process, particularly in countries where these pathways are not yet institutionalised or widely recognised.

5.3.1.1 Examples And Major Initiatives for Social Economy Skills

European skills certifications, dedicated or adapted to the needs of Social Economy structures, exist and are in full development thanks to projects such as baSE or Social Tech Academy. They are based on sectoral skills frameworks and innovative training platforms, and benefit from the recognition of European tools for validating prior learning. So, there are European skills certifications dedicated to SE structures, supported and developed as part of European projects, notably via Erasmus+, EPALE and other programmes.

Blueprint for advanced skills & trainings in the social economy (baSE project)

This European project explicitly aims to strengthen the skills of SE professionals. It brings together companies, training bodies, research institutes and social economy networks to:

- Develop a sector skills strategy,
- Designing practical training solutions,
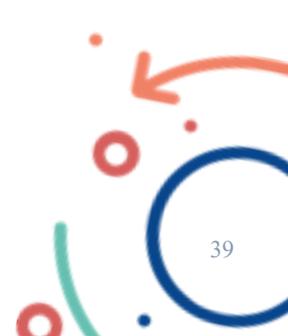
- Set up a specific skills framework, called "SocioComp", for updating professional profiles,
- Developing a MOOC platform dedicated to the ongoing training of SE players on the ecological and digital transition and inclusion.

The baSE project will result in certifications and training courses recognised at European level, tailored to the specific needs of the SE.

Social Tech Academy

This European programme coordinated by SOGA and funded under Erasmus + (2021-2024) offers peer-to-peer, open source and democratic digital acculturation, specifically designed for SE players. It aims to strengthen their digital skills and their ability to participate in the construction of digital public policies in Europe. The skills acquired under this programme are recognised and promoted in the digital transition of SE organisation.

EMPLOY SSE project (Erasmus+)

A 120-hour transnational training course, alternating theory and practice, designed for education and vocational training professionals. It comprises four modules (introduction to SE, democratic management, design of SE products/services, local development) and aims for transnational recognition of certifications. Several European associations are taking part, guaranteeing a shared approach and certification on a European scale.

EU3Digital

EU3Digital is maybe the most useful project of all for our purpose of skills certification adapted to Social Economy organisations. The EU3Digital project is a European initiative funded by Erasmus+ whose main objective is to strengthen the digital skills of Third Sector Organisations (TSOs) and Social Enterprises (SEs) across Europe. To this end, EU3Digital has developed a European digital skills framework specifically tailored to these organisations, as well as a set of educational resources, training modules and practical tools. These resources aim to enable leaders and professionals in the sector to successfully navigate the digital transformation by providing them with concrete ways to assess and improve their digital skills and by facilitating access to a freely accessible online knowledge centre. The project is based on a participatory approach involving stakeholders from the sector in several European countries (Spain, the

Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Portugal and Croatia) through surveys, discussion groups and pilot training sessions to ensure the relevance and adaptability of the results.

EU3Digital is not limited to training: it also offers a toolkit for developing contingency plans, promotes cross-sector collaboration and publishes a policy paper for European institutions, highlighting the importance of digital skills for the social impact and sustainability of organisations in the sector. The usefulness of the EU3Digital project for the SETS project is clear. SETS aims to support the digital transition of Social Economy organisations by developing training programmes tailored to their skills needs, particularly digital skills. EU3Digital provides SETS with a solid methodological and pedagogical foundation, with skills frameworks, assessment tools and training resources that have already been tested with stakeholders in the sector. By building on the achievements and tools of EU3Digital, SETS can accelerate the design and dissemination of its own training modules, ensure the relevance of its content and promote the recognition of skills at European level, thereby contributing to a more effective and inclusive digital transition for the social economy.

Competence centres and integration into curricula

The European recommendation encourages the creation of skills centres for training in the Social Economy, at national and transnational level, and the integration of the social economy into entrepreneurship, management and support courses for young NEETs, to promote the recognition and validation of skills acquired in the SE. The European Competence Centres for Social Innovation were established by the European Commission as a key measure following the European Action Plan for the Social Economy. These centres, supported under the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and the Social Innovation+ initiative, aim to accelerate the development, transfer, and scaling up of innovative solutions to societal challenges— particularly in employment, education, skills, and social inclusion. Six consortia, covering 25 countries and involving 148 organizations, were selected to set up national competence centres that operate at local, regional, national, and transnational levels. Their main objectives include building networks, fostering capacity building, and developing tools and methods essential for the growth of social innovation across the EU. The European Competence Centre works closely with these national centres to facilitate knowledge sharing, mutual learning, and the dissemination of best practices, while also supporting EU-level calls for transnational projects and promoting the use of ESF+ funding for social innovation. This coordinated approach is

designed to enhance the social economy ecosystem, support social enterprises, and contribute to a more inclusive and resilient Europe in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights.

EPALE platform resources

- **EPALE Resource Kit: Building the future by meeting digital, green and solidarity challenges**

- EPALE Resource Kit - EPALE for the European Year of Competences

Universities and specialised establishments

- **University of Lille - Public Action, Institutions and SSE (APIESS) programme:** Master's degree course focusing on management skills, analysis and evaluation of SE structures, with a strong professional dimension (internships, project management, network of SSE players).
- **Sciences Po Lille - SSE certification training cycle:** Continuing regional training leading to certification, in partnership with the CRESS Hauts-de-France, tailored to entrepreneurs, managers, project leaders and elected representatives wishing to develop their skills in the SE.

Specific professional certifications

- **Title of Company Manager in the Social and Solidarity Economy (DEESS)**

Level 7 professional certification (Bac+5, RNCP 37999), awarded by ASKORIA and APRADIS. It is made up of 6 blocks of independently certifiable skills, covering diagnosis, strategy, financial management, quality, human resources and governance in the SSE. The course is eligible for the CPF and is available for continuing education, with a high degree of modularity and a high success rate.

- **MOOCs skills certifications**

MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) are online courses open to all, often free of charge, offered by internationally recognised universities, grandes écoles or companies. At the end of these courses, it is usually possible to obtain a certificate of participation or, in some cases, a verified certificate or even a diploma for the most advanced courses. The value of MOOC certification depends on the platform (Coursera, edX, FUN Mooc, etc.) and the institution offering the course. Verified certificates, which are subject to a fee, certify that

the participant has completed and passed all course assessments, sometimes with identity verification. Although these certifications do not replace a traditional university degree, they are valued by employers, particularly when they come from prestigious institutions (Harvard, Sorbonne, etc.) or complement a professional background. MOOCs thus enable individuals to broaden their skills, specialise in a field and enhance their CV with qualifications that are recognised in many sectors. Platforms such as FUN MOOC or Studi offer micro-certifications at the end of short modules, entirely online, with transparent assessment criteria and growing recognition on the job market.

Certification e-learning platforms

The main online platforms offering training courses leading to a qualification in the SE in Europe are as follows:

- **ILO MOOC on the Social Solidarity Economy:** Offered by the International Labour Organization, this MOOC is available in 6 languages and provides a digital certificate at the end of the course. It covers the concepts, values, legal frameworks and links between the SE and sustainable development. It is aimed at decision-makers, practitioners, academics and SE players.

- **FUN MOOC:** The French FUN MOOC platform regularly hosts training courses on the SSE, including the MOOC "L'ESS, levier de développement territorial" offered by the CNFPT. These courses cover the fundamentals, case studies, local policy tools and the ecological and social transition. They issue attendance certificates or certificates depending on the session.

- **Sciences Po Lille - ESE continuing education:** In partnership with the Hauts-de-France Regional SE Chamber, Sciences Po Lille is offering a regional online training course leading to certification. It is aimed at managers, entrepreneurs, volunteers and elected representatives wishing to develop their skills in the SE, with official recognition.

- **European Training Centre (CEF):** The CEF offers Qualiopi-certified distance learning courses, with pathways tailored to continuing professional development. Although generalist, the CEF offers modules that may be useful for certain SE professions and delivers recognised qualifications (RNCP, professional certificates).

- **FutureLearn, edX, Udemy:** These major international platforms offer online courses on SE, social entrepreneurship and social innovation, often in partnership with universities or European institutions. Some courses lead to official certificates after validation of prior learning.

Initiative/Platform	Description	Recognition	Target Audience
baSE Project	Blueprint for advanced skills & training in the social economy; includes a SocioComp framework and a dedicated MOOC platform	Certifications and training courses recognised at European level	Social Economy professionals, trainers, networks
Social Tech Academy	Peer-to-peer digital acculturation programme for SE actors, coordinated by SOGA	Digital skills recognised in SE digital transition initiatives	SE stakeholders focused on digital transformation
EMPLOY SSE (Erasmus+)	120-hour transnational training in SE fundamentals for education and training professionals	Shared European certification	VET professionals and SE trainers
EU3Digital	Skills framework and toolkit to support digital skills in Third Sector Organisations	Policy paper and validated training resources for SEOs	SE leaders and professionals across Europe
Competence Centres for Social Innovation	National and transnational centres established under ESF+ to support SE and social innovation	Supported by European Commission and aligned with European Pillar of Social Rights	National and local SE ecosystems, policy makers
EPALE Platform	Resource kits supporting digital, green, and solidarity challenges	Widely used across Europe for adult	Adult educators, SE trainers

		education and VET initiatives	
University Programmes (e.g. Lille, Sciences Po)	Formal university programmes and regional certifications in SE management and evaluation	EQF-aligned degrees and regional certifications	Students, entrepreneurs, local authorities
DEESS	Professional Title of Company Manager in SSE (RNCP level 7)	National professional certification with CPF eligibility	Managers in the SSE
MOOCs Skills Certifications	Online certifications from platforms like FUN MOOC, Coursera, edX	Certificates of participation or verified credentials	General learners, professionals in SE
Certification e-learning platforms	Platforms like ILO, FUN MOOC, Sciences Po, CEF, FutureLearn offering SE-relevant content	Varied – some RNCP, Qualiopi, others issue digital badges	Professionals, decision-makers, volunteers, educators in SE

Table 3. Social Economy Skills Certifications and Initiatives

6. Partners Involvement

This methodology also involves close collaboration with key project partners, whose expertise and experience are crucial in ensuring the relevance and applicability of the certification mechanisms. Each partner plays a vital role in the design, testing, and implementation of these mechanisms.

All Digital. All Digital, as a key partner in the project, brings its expertise in digital skills and inclusion. All Digital has a strong track record in promoting digital literacy across Europe, particularly in non-formal and informal learning settings. This partner plays a crucial role in guiding the development of the digital competences and ensuring that the training modules align with European digital standards, such as DigComp.

Prizma. Prizma, based in Slovenia, provides valuable insights into the local context of non-university certifications. In Slovenia, certifications that are not linked to university-level qualifications are not widely recognised or institutionalised. This challenge highlights the importance of ensuring that the competencies certified within the project are not only aligned with European standards but also tailored to the specific needs of regions where certification systems may not yet be fully developed. Prizma's role is critical in adapting the certification models to Slovenia's unique regulatory environment and in working with local stakeholders to increase the recognition of non-university certifications.

Diesis. Diesis provides overall project supervision and ensures that the project stays aligned with the strategic objectives and European policy frameworks. Diesis has extensive experience in the Social Economy and plays a critical role in the coordination and quality assurance of the project's activities. The organisation's involvement guarantees that the certification mechanisms developed are consistent with EU-level goals, such as promoting social innovation and ensuring the recognition of competences across Member States. Diesis will use its network to disseminate the training programmes beyond the project timeline and offer them as an opportunity and educational tool for the target groups in different countries around Europe. Diesis will provide this opportunity to organisations that are members of Diesis Network and RAISE – Research Alliance developed by Diesis, consisted of research institutions focused on sustainable entrepreneurship and innovation.

Open Impact. Open Impact ensures the quality and effectiveness of its courses through participant surveys closely aligned with a dedicated Impact framework. After completing the course, participants are asked to evaluate not just their satisfaction, but also the real outcomes they've experienced (such as improved digital and transversal skills, greater professional development, and enhanced employability). The surveys also assess broader organizational benefits, including increased sustainability, intellectual capital, and digital autonomy. By gathering both quantitative and qualitative feedback, Open Impact measures how its training leads to better services, upgraded professional profiles, and the creation of digital products and services. This structured, evidence-based approach allows Open Impact to continuously refine its offerings and demonstrate meaningful, measurable impact for both individuals and organizations.

6.1 Expert Consultations and Data Collection

The methodology also incorporates data collection from various sources to ensure that the certification mechanisms are based on solid evidence and best practices. This includes reviewing existing certification systems and frameworks, consulting with stakeholders in the SE sector, and analysing the needs and challenges faced by workers and organisations in the sector. The findings from this research will inform the development of the certification mechanisms and help ensure that they are effective in addressing the skills gap in the digital and entrepreneurial sectors.

Additionally, a key part of the methodology is the impact assessment, which will evaluate the effectiveness of the certification mechanisms once they have been implemented. This assessment will focus on how well the competencies are recognised across Member States, the extent to which they contribute to enhancing employability and mobility, and how they help increase the resilience and competitiveness of organisations within the SE.

6.1.1 Summary of Interviews Conducted by SOGA as Part of the Certification Process

Complementary to our documentary analysis to establish the state of the art and to our partners expertise, we conducted seven interviews with external experts in order to clarify the SETS certification strategy.

6.1.1.1 List of Interviews Conducted by SOGA

Date	Main contact	Organisation	Subject/Main object
09/01/2025	Jean-François Plard	PIX	PIX digital skills certification and integration into SETS, procedures, European recognition
06/09/2024	Jean-François Plard, Mame-Fatou SÉNE, SOGA	PIX/SOGA	Certification of SETS and DIGISET training courses, national/European coordination, co-creation of modules
10/01/2025	Christophe Wilmart	Isograd (TOSA)	Tosa DigComp certification: operation, European deployment, sectoral adaptation, cost, SETS relevance
25/03/2024	Chris Delepierre	Trezorium/ Open Recognition	Integration of open badges in SETS, open recognition, articulation of badges/formal certification
Nov-Dec 2024	Alexia Froudkine	EIT Digital	Possibility of obtaining the EIT label for SETS training courses, European recognition, access procedures
28/05/2025	EIT Digital Paris	EIT Digital	Clarification of the EIT label, opening to external players, prospects for SETS
12/06/2025	Bérénice Cappe, Susana Major	AGENCE EPALE/ AEFA (France)	To discuss how the EPALE Agency manages the interoperability of VET certifications, advising on and coordinating the progress of funded projects, and the progressive documentation of progress.

Table 4. List of Interviews Conducted by SOGA

6.1.1.2 Detailed Summary of Learning from These Interviews for SETS Project

European Digital Certification: PIX and TOSA

The PIX and Tosa DigComp certifications are both aligned with the European DigComp reference framework, guaranteeing solid recognition of digital skills on a European scale.

PIX, a French scheme, offers an online assessment of 16 skills, issuing a certificate that is valid for three years, recognised by the State and can be integrated into Europass, thereby promoting mobility and the transparency of digital qualifications.

- **How it works**: *"PIX certification assesses 16 digital skills at 8 levels via a 2-hour online exam. It is recognised by the French government and listed in the Répertoire spécifique"* (Jean-François Plard, 09/01/2025).
 Cost: €59/pass in France (€15 donated to PIX).
- **European recognition**: *"PIX has been translated into English and Dutch, but there is as yet no harmonised DigComp certification at European level. The Commission is working on a quality label for existing certifications"* (ibid.).
- **Limits for the SSE**: *"Official PIX certification remains generalist. For specific EHS profiles, we need to combine customised diagnostics (PIX Organ) and standard certification"* (CR PIX-SOGA meeting, 06/09/2024).
- **Source** : CR entretien PIX (09/01/2025) + PIX-SOGA meeting (06/09/2024)

Tosa DigComp is available in over 20 European countries, translated into several languages, and delivered via a network of approved centres or remotely, at an average cost of €40-60 per visit.

- **Deployment**:
 "We are rolling out TOSA DigComp in 20 European countries, with tests in 6 languages. The average cost is €40-60 per test" (Christophe Wilmart, Isograd).
- **Sectoral adaptability**: *"The official certificate covers the whole of DigComp. For an ESS adaptation, a specific co-development would be required"* (ibid.).
- **Source**: TOSA interview (10/01/2025)

These certifications are general: they attest to a common base of digital skills, but do not allow sector-specific customisation (ESS) in their official version. However, non-certifying assessment tests (PIX Organ, Tosa diagnostic) can be adapted to target specific needs before the final certification, enabling learners to develop their skills according to their business profile.

From an operational point of view, the SETS project will have to rely in the short term on existing accredited centres to deliver the PIX and Tosa certifications, given the absence of Calliope/SOGA accreditation at this stage. The costs of certification, which are not negligible for people receiving free training, mean that funding solutions need to be anticipated (dedicated budgets, employer support, pooling).

In the medium term, SOGA's accreditation as a PIX certification body could strengthen the project's autonomy and its ability to deliver its own certifications.

Harmonisation and European recognition

One of the major challenges identified is the harmonisation of certifications to ensure that they are recognised at both national and European level. Interviews with PIX and SOGA highlighted the importance of aligning with European reference systems (DigComp, ESCO) and the need to set up a working group with SSE players to pool and harmonise professional reference systems.

This would make it possible to avoid duplication, ensure the comparability of courses and facilitate the mobility of SSE professionals at EU level.

Open Badges: complementarity, inclusion and innovation

The interview with Chris Delepierre, a French expert and leader of the Open Badge community in France, highlights the added value of open badges in recognising cross-disciplinary skills, commitment and informal learning, which are often not covered by standardised qualifications.

- **Added value**: *"Open Badges make it possible to value what formal qualifications ignore: community involvement, resilience... Key skills for the SSE"*.
- **Linking up with Europass**: *"A "SSE collaborative project leader" badge can be issued in French and English, stored in Europass and shared on LinkedIn. It's a bridge between informality and institutional recognition"*.

- **Recommendations**: *"Involve SSE players in the co-creation of badges. Rigorously document the award criteria to strengthen their credibility with employers"*.
- **Source**: Interview with Chris Delepierre (25/03/2024)

Open badges, which are compatible with Europass and the European reference systems, therefore offer flexible, motivating and inclusive recognition, which is particularly well suited to SSE pathways and to people who are far removed from conventional curricula. Their integration into SETS would make it possible to recognise all the stages of the pathway: diagnosis, intermediate badges, final certification, community involvement badge. Rigorous documentation of award criteria and the involvement of SSE communities in the co-construction of badges are essential to strengthen their credibility and value to employers.

There is, however, one condition: they must be supported by a fairly robust information system (such as a Learning Management System).

European Labels and Institutional Recognition: EIT Label

Discussions with EIT Digital, mentioned in the SETS application, revealed that the EIT label, although recognised at European level for non-degree courses, is still mainly awarded to internal EIT activities and is not yet open to external organisations such as SOGA.

- **Restriction of the EIT label to its members**: *"The EIT label is reserved for training courses run by Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs). We do not envisage opening it up to external players such as SOGA"* (Mail EIT Digital Paris, 28/05/2025).
- **Alternatives**: *"Explore EQAVET-aligned certifications or national labels such as Qualiopi"* (Alexia Froudkine, EIT Digital).
- **Sources**: EIT Digital exchanges (Nov-Dec 2024 / May 2025)

In the short term, this situation limits the possibility of obtaining this label for SETS pathways, but it also means that we need to keep a close eye on developments in the policy of opening up the EIT label and exploring other avenues for European labelling (EQAVET, Qualiopi, national accreditation).

Certification Costs and Budget Constraints

Digital certifications, although essential for the recognition of skills, represent a significant item of expenditure for project promoters such as SETS. Interviews with PIX, TOSA and institutional players reveal that costs vary depending on the system:

- **PIX**: Between **€45** (recommended retail price) and **€59** (maximum cost in France in 2025)
- **TOSA DigComp: €40 to €60** per pass, depending on country and volume ([source 5][CR-entretien-TOSA]).
- **Open Badges**: Marginal cost (free or low-cost platforms such as Badgr), but requires investment in pedagogical engineering for design and management ([source 4][CR-entretien-Open-Badges]).

For a European project like SETS, whose training courses are often free for beneficiaries, these costs pose major challenges:

- *"The project's limited budget means that certification cannot be systematically funded for all learners. We have to find alternative solutions: employer funding, dedicated budget lines, or pooling between partners"* (Jean-François Plard, PIX, [source 1][CR-entretiens-PIX]).
- *"TOSA certification is affordable for group orders, but remains an obstacle for small SSE structures"* (Christophe Wilmart, Isograd, [source 5][CR-entretien-TOSA]).

Evaluating the cost of a learning management system incorporating European certification tools

In financial terms, while the software solution remains free, there are additional costs to consider: hosting (from a few hundred to several thousand euros a year, depending on size and web hosting), customisation and specific development, training for administrators and technical support. Specialised service providers offer solutions tailored to all types of organisation, from small associations to European consortia, with services ranging from standard installation to advanced integration with existing information.

Investing in an open source LMS such as Moodle is therefore particularly relevant for SETS: it guarantees the centralisation and traceability of courses, the issuing of interoperable badges and digital certifications, and the integration of European reference systems (DigComp, EQF, Europass), while offering the flexibility needed to adapt content and interfaces to the specific needs of the social economy.

6.2 Practical Recommendations and Strategic Perspectives for SETS

6.2.1 Persistent Challenges and the Need for Vigilance

- **Importance and cost of a robust digital infrastructure for managing learning and certification data.** This issue was clearly not taken into account in the project framework (budget and mobilisation of a minimal of digital project management skills among the partners), even though it is essential for the implementation of a certification of European skills acquired through training, as well as for the quality certification of the whole. The issue of data management and the interoperability of indicators and collected data is one of the major problems encountered in the project. However, taking this into account would have represented a significant additional cost.

- **Interoperability of qualifications**: Despite the progress made by Europass Digital Credentials, transnational recognition remains partial. "*There is still no harmonised DigComp qualification at European level*" (Jean-François Plard, [source 1][CR-entretien-PIX]).

- **Complexity of quality labels**: The EIT Label, although recognised, remains inaccessible to external players. "*The EIT label is reserved for the activities of Knowledge and Innovation Communities*" (Mail EIT Digital, [source 6][EIT-x-SOGA]).

- **Regulatory developments**: The European recommendation on micro-certifications (2022/C 243/02) could impose new standards by 2027, requiring active monitoring.

6.2.2 Financing Strategies and Existing Levers

Several avenues have been identified to reduce costs or mobilise external funding:

- **Use of the CPF (Personal Training Account)**: The PIX and TOSA certifications are eligible for the CPF, enabling learners to finance all or part of their certification ([source 10][Francenum]). However, since 2025, a compulsory financial contribution of **€102.23**

has been required for CPF training, with some exceptions (jobseekers, employer funding).

- **European funds and national programmes**: Erasmus+ projects or ESF (European Social Fund) funds could be used to co-finance qualifications, particularly in the context of transnational partnerships.

- **Involvement of SSE employers**: *"SSE employers are increasingly aware of the importance of digital certification. Some agree to finance the training in exchange for a commitment from their employees"* (Clarisse Blanc, SOGA, [source 3][Réunion-PIX-SOGA]).

6.2.2.1   In the Short-Term (2025-2026)

1. **It would have been possible to use existing approved centres**:
   o   Use the PIX (France, Belgium) and TOSA (20 European countries) networks to avoid initial certification costs.
   o   *"As SOGA is not yet a certification body, this solution is the most realistic"* ([source 1][CR-entretien-PIX]).
   o   We finally decided collectively to opt for the micro-credentials issued by All Digital, which is authorised to do so.

2. **Integrate non-certifying diagnostic tests**:
   o   Use **PIX Orga** or **TOSA Diagnostic** to target needs before final certification, reducing failures and unnecessary costs.

3. **Experiment with Open Badges as part of the migration to a robust LMS (e.g. Moodle)**: Start with free or low-cost badges to promote commitment and soft skills, in addition to formal certifications, and try by the end of the year to systematically integrate open badges at each stage of the course to promote commitment, informal learning and progress.

4. **Implementing a more robust LMS, compatible with the European Learning Model.** Setting up a robust digital infrastructure, based on an open source Learning Management System (LMS) such as Moodle, is an essential lever for effectively managing learning and certification data in European projects such as SETS. An open source LMS offers major advantages: it is free to install, highly customisable, and

allows total control of data, thus guaranteeing compliance with the RGPD and the digital sovereignty of organisations7111213. Moodle, in particular, stands out for its extensive library of plugins (over 2,000 extensions), its native compatibility with European standards (SCORM, LTI, Europass), and its ability to manage multilingualism, enhanced since 2023 by an open source instant translation plug-in developed for the European Commission913. This feature makes it possible to offer training courses and qualifications in all EU languages, facilitating European inclusion and interoperability.

6.2.2.2 Medium-term (2026-2027)

1. **Obtaining Qualiopi accreditation for SOGA** :
   o This French quality certification, aligned with the EQAVET framework, would enable SOGA to deliver training courses eligible for the CPF and to negotiate preferential rates with PIX/TOSA.
2. **Set up a European SSE working group**: Pool skills repositories with partners such as UDES, Uniformation and Diesis Network to harmonise costs and avoid duplication. To this end, set up an SSE working group to harmonise skills reference systems and share best certification practices.

6.2.2.3 Long-term (2027+)

1. **Pooling intelligence on the recognition of VET training qualifications for the Social Economy**
   o Monitor developments in European recognition of digital qualifications and explore sector-specific adaptation of official qualifications (co-development with Isograd/PIX if necessary).
   o Remain attentive to the opening up of European labels to strengthen the institutional recognition of SETS training courses.
2. **Co-develop a SSE sector certification**:
   o In partnership with Isograd or PIX, create an SSE version of DigComp qualifications, combining digital skills and specific soft skills (e.g. "SSE collaborative project management").

- o *"A sectoral certification would require an initial investment, but would increase the relevance for SSE employers"* (Christophe Wilmart, [source 5][CR-entretien-TOSA]).

3. **Calling for a dedicated European fund**:
   - o Influence European policies via the Social Economy Europe network to create a funding mechanism dedicated to SSE certifications, similar to the **ESF+**.

6.3 Integrated Certification Processes for SETS Project

6.3.1 Chosen Methodology by the SETS Project

In order to establish a list of key skills to be acquired and certified within the SETS training programme, Social Good Accelerator has drawn up a table (Table 1 - Appendix 1) matching several European-level recognised skills frameworks (DigComp 2.2, Entrecomp and GreenComp, which was ultimately rejected), and their adaptation to the SE within the framework of third-party programmes (in particular the EU3Digital project, which proposed an adaptation of DigComp to third sector structures) and its Social Tech Academy project funded by the Erasmus+ Agency (2022-2025).

In addition, a benchmark of existing AI training courses has been established (Table 2 - Annex 2).

These tables are included in the annex and were used as a reference for writing the syllabuses for the three SETS training courses, to offer content that will enable progress to be made on these referenced and certifiable skills at European level.

The question that arises with regard to certification is how to strike the right balance between certifications for long training courses linked to vocational training (registered in the national register of professional or specific skills of the various member countries and subject to Europass equivalence) and micro-certifications adapted to short training courses, which are complementary and currently being developed at European level.

6.3.2 Mapping of Certified Competencies

The mapping of certified competencies is a crucial step in ensuring that the skills developed within the Social Economy (SE) are recognised, validated, and comparable across European Member States. This section aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the key competencies that have been identified and certified through the project. By aligning these competencies with European reference frameworks such as EntreComp, DigComp, EQF, ECTS, and Europass, the mapping ensures that these skills can be effectively recognised and transferred across different national systems.

6.3.2.1 Draw a List of Key Competencies from European Referential and European Project Work on Social Economy Adaptations

The key competencies included in this report have been derived from two major European frameworks: EntreComp (Entrepreneurship Competence Framework) and DigComp (Digital Competence Framework for Citizens). These frameworks are particularly relevant to the Social Economy, where skills related to social entrepreneurship, digital inclusion, and community-driven innovation are critical for success

From the research work and need analysis (WP2), we draw a correspondance table in between the Dog Comp and Entrecomp and the proritized skills to integrate to our trainings and certficiation systems.

We mixed 3 sources : Dig Comp and Entrecomp and adapted referentials for Social Economy such as EU3 digtial framworks and Social Tech Acemony Frameworks. From them we drew very specific skills to train for and we put them at the core of the training desisng (WP3).

See annexe

6.3.2.2 Competency Descriptors and Proficiency Levels for the Social Economy

Each competence derived from the EntreComp and DigComp frameworks is associated with a set of descriptors that outline the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to demonstrate competence at different proficiency levels. These descriptors are aligned with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) to ensure that the competences are comparable across Member States and that the proficiency levels are consistent with European standards.

For example, in the EntreComp framework, the competence "Ideas and Opportunities" might be assessed at various levels of proficiency:

- Level 1 (Basic): Recognises an opportunity when it arises, with little analysis of the potential impact or value.
- Level 3 (Advanced): Independently identifies, evaluates, and develops innovative ideas that address social needs or market gaps. *This could be demonstrated through the creation of a social enterprise that tackles an identified local challenge.*

Similarly, in DigComp, the competence "Information and Data Literacy" can be assessed at different levels, such as:

- Level 2 (Intermediate): Able to search and select relevant digital information, critically evaluate sources, and manage data in digital environments. *A practical example in the SE might include using open data to support a community project or social service.*
- Level 4 (Expert): Able to use advanced digital tools to analyse large datasets, derive insights, and make data-driven decisions. *For example, an SE organisation might use big data analysis to improve the impact of its social interventions.*

These descriptors and levels of proficiency ensure that the competencies are measurable and that individuals can demonstrate their skills through tangible outcomes, providing a clear pathway for certification.

6.3.2.3 Correspondence Tables

The mapping of competencies to European Qualifications Framework (EQF), ECTS, Europass, and national systems is a key aspect of ensuring the portability and recognition of certifications across Member States. The competencies developed in the project are aligned with the EQF levels, which range from basic knowledge and skills (level 1) to advanced expertise (level 8). By mapping competencies to EQF levels, the project ensures that the qualifications awarded are comparable and can be recognised across the EU.

ECTS credits are also used to map the learning effort and outcomes associated with the training programmes developed within the project. For example, a training module focused on digital skills might be assigned 5 ECTS credits based on the workload required to achieve the learning outcomes and competencies specified in the DigComp framework.

The Europass tool, which provides a structured and standardised format for documenting competences, will be used to make the acquired skills more visible and easily accessible. By aligning the competencies with Europass descriptors, individuals will be able to create a digital portfolio that showcases their certifications and can be shared with potential employers or educational institutions across Europe.

Furthermore, the project will ensure that the competencies are mapped to national systems where applicable. This is particularly important in countries such as Slovenia, where non-university certifications are less institutionalised. By aligning with national frameworks, the project helps to integrate these competencies into the local context, making them more accessible and valuable for individuals and organisations in those regions.

7. Chosen Assessment and Validation Methods

The assessment and validation of competences play a crucial role in ensuring that the skills and knowledge gained through the training programmes are accurately recognised and valued. In the context of the SE, where many individuals gain their competences through non-formal or informal learning pathways, it is essential to have robust and flexible evaluation methods. These methods must be inclusive and able to measure competencies that may not be easily assessed through traditional academic evaluations. This section provides an overview of the various evaluation modalities, the digital tools used for assessment, and the sample certification pathways that will guide the certification process for learners.

The central issue in choosing a learning management system for content development, the learning experience and training monitoring for trainers and learners. One of the major challenges we faced in this project was choosing a learning management system (LMS) that was robust, user-friendly for both front-end and back-end use, and, if possible, open source. One of the key lessons learned from the project is that this choice is central to the quality of the learning experience, the acquisition of skills, the satisfaction of learners and trainers, and the management of skills certification elements.

However, despite our extremely thorough benchmarking, thanks to the tool https://www.lms-opensource.net/ and its FFFOD Guide to choosing an LMS https://www.lms-opensource.net/content/guide-du-fffod-pour-choisir-son-lms, the exercise was not easy, as the European online skills certification system provides very little guidance or recommendations on the choice of LMS.

The LMS that was ultimately chosen, Sparks, was selected because it was developed with European funding specifically to address the various challenges of online certification, interoperability and ease of use for small training organisations wishing to develop transnational training courses at European level. However, the experience has been disappointing, and it seems clear to us that this system would benefit from further investment to improve it in close collaboration with its users. The biggest problem is that it does not allow data to be centralised and managed from registration to final assessment and therefore does not meet quality

certification requirements. Nor does it provide a ready-to-use certification framework for key competences.

7.1 Evaluation Modalities

To ensure that the competencies are effectively evaluated and validated, a combination of different evaluation modalities is used. These methods are designed to be flexible, allowing for the recognition of a wide range of skills and experiences, including those acquired in non-traditional learning settings.

a) **Quizzes** are used to assess the theoretical understanding of a specific subject or competency. These assessments are typically multiple-choice or short-answer questions designed to test the knowledge of key concepts. Quizzes can be used as formative assessments, providing instant feedback to learners on their progress and helping them identify areas for improvement.

b) **Self-diagnosis tools** allow learners to assess their own skills and competencies. This method encourages self-reflection and helps learners understand their strengths and areas for further development. Self-diagnosis tools are often used as part of the process of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), where individuals evaluate their existing knowledge and experiences against defined learning outcomes.

c) **Portfolios** are another important assessment method, particularly for recognising informal or experiential learning. A portfolio allows learners to gather evidence of their skills, such as projects, reports, photos, and testimonials, and demonstrate their competencies in a structured way. Portfolios are especially valuable for showcasing practical abilities that may not be easily captured through traditional exams or quizzes.

d) **Interviews** are often used to assess competencies in more depth, particularly when it comes to soft skills or interpersonal abilities. Structured or semi-structured interviews allow assessors to ask learners questions related to their experiences, problem-solving abilities, and how they apply their knowledge in real-world contexts. Interviews can provide valuable insights into a learner's ability to translate theoretical knowledge into practical action.

e) **Evidence of experience** is crucial for validating informal learning. This method involves reviewing concrete examples of work, volunteer projects, or community involvement that demonstrate the learner's competencies. For example, a learner might provide evidence of a social project they managed or an innovation they implemented within a community. This is particularly relevant for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), where individuals can demonstrate the skills, they have acquired outside formal education systems.

7.2 Digital Tools Used

The project uses a range of digital tools. They are detailed above. Below is a centralized list of the tools mentioned, which will facilitate and enhance the assessment and validation process:

- **Learning Management Systems (LMS)**: Centralise assessments, quizzes, and progress tracking, providing a structured environment for learners to access materials, submit assignments, and manage certifications.
- **Europass**: A tool for documenting and showcasing competencies, providing a standardised European CV format to present qualifications, skills, and learning experiences, including non-formal and informal learning.
- **Open Badges**: Digital credentials awarded for completing milestones or modules, which can be shared on platforms like LinkedIn, personal portfolios, or Europass, offering a portable and verifiable form of recognition.
- **PIX**: A digital platform for assessing and certifying digital competencies, particularly in the green and digital skills sectors, offering self-assessments, feedback, and recognised certificates.

These tools make the certification process more efficient, transparent, and accessible, especially for non-formal and informal learning, ensuring portability of qualifications across borders.

7.3 Sample Certification Pathways

The certification pathways within the project are designed to be clear, structured, and aligned with European standards. These pathways outline the steps required to earn a certification, the duration of the programme, and the documents delivered upon completion.

The certification process typically begins with an initial assessment of the learner's existing skills and knowledge. This may involve completing an online quiz, submitting a portfolio, or undergoing a self-diagnosis. Based on the learner's current level of competence, a tailored learning pathway is designed, consisting of several training modules or courses that progressively build the necessary skills.

The duration of the certification pathway depends on the complexity of the competences being developed. Short courses may last from a few hours to a few days, while more comprehensive training programmes could span several weeks or months. Each module or course is designed to provide the learner with a combination of theoretical knowledge and practical skills, ensuring that they are well-equipped to apply their learning in real-world settings.

Upon successful completion of the training pathway, the learner receives documentation to validate their newly acquired competencies. This could include a certificate of achievement, a digital badge, or an open badge. In some cases, a learner may also receive Europass documentation to help them present their competences in a European format. This documentation serves as official recognition of their skills and enables them to share their qualifications with potential employers, educational institutions, or other stakeholders.

The certification pathways are designed to be flexible, allowing learners to progress at their own pace and demonstrate their competencies through a variety of assessment methods. These pathways are also aligned with European frameworks, such as EQF and ECTS, to ensure that they are recognised across Member States and that the learning outcomes are comparable to other qualifications in Europe.

Adapting certification systems for the Social Economy requires a focus on social impact and the recognition of competencies that go beyond traditional business and technical skills. By incorporating these aspects into national and European certification frameworks, the recognition and portability of competencies in the SE can be greatly enhanced, contributing to the growth and resilience of this sector across Europe.

8. Recommendations for Mutual Recognition and European Integration

The integration of European qualification systems and the mutual recognition of competences are vital for facilitating mobility, improving employability, and fostering a more interconnected European labour market. The aim is to ensure that skills and qualifications gained through training programmes, particularly within the Social Economy (SE), are acknowledged across borders. This section highlights key recommendations based on the best practices identified earlier, an analysis of the barriers and enablers to mutual recognition and proposes steps to improve the certification systems to support broader European integration.

8.1 Best Practices

Several best practices have been identified through the examination of certification mechanisms across different Member States. One of the most significant best practices is the alignment of national certification systems with European frameworks such as the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and ECTS. This alignment ensures that qualifications are not only comparable across borders but are also recognised within different sectors. It provides a common reference point for assessing competencies, making it easier for individuals to have their qualifications recognised when they move across Member States.

Another key best practice is the use of digital tools for certification and recognition, such as Europass, open badges, and platforms like PIX. These tools ensure that certifications are not only transparent and accessible but also portable and verifiable. Digital credentials allow learners to share their qualifications easily across Europe, making it simpler for employers and institutions to verify the authenticity and value of qualifications. These tools also provide a level of flexibility that is crucial in recognising competencies gained through non-formal and informal learning pathways, which are common in the SE.

The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) process is also an essential best practice that has been successfully implemented in many countries. RPL allows individuals to have their non-formal and informal learning validated, enabling them to gain formal recognition for the skills and knowledge they have acquired outside the traditional educational system. This approach is

particularly valuable in the SE, where many individuals gain significant experience through volunteering, work, or community-based activities that may not be captured by formal educational qualifications.

Lastly, the integration of social entrepreneurship and social innovation into certification systems is a promising practice. The SE often involves addressing social challenges, and recognising the competencies related to social impact, community development, and sustainability is crucial. This ensures that the sector's unique contributions are acknowledged within national and European qualification frameworks, increasing the sector's visibility and enhancing the professional development of those working within it.

8.2 Barriers

Several barriers and enablers influence the process of mutual recognition and integration of qualifications across Europe. These factors need to be addressed to create a more effective and inclusive certification system.

One of the main barriers is the lack of standardisation in national qualification systems. While frameworks like the EQF provide a common reference point, there are still significant differences in how qualifications are assessed, accredited, and recognised across Member States. This lack of harmonisation creates challenges for individuals seeking recognition of their qualifications across borders and makes it difficult for employers and institutions to compare qualifications from different countries.

Another barrier is the limited recognition of non-formal and informal learning. Many individuals in the SE gain valuable skills through volunteering, work experience, or other non-traditional learning pathways, yet these skills are often not recognised within formal certification systems. This gap limits opportunities for individuals to gain formal recognition for their competencies and can hinder their ability to advance in their careers or access further training.

Additionally, the complexity of certification application processes can create obstacles, particularly for smaller organisations or those within the SE. Many certification systems, especially those linked to European initiatives like the EIT Label, require extensive documentation and administrative effort. The complexity of this process can discourage smaller

players or those without sufficient resources from seeking certification, thus limiting their access to valuable recognition and support.

8.2.1 Enablers

On the other hand, there are several enablers that can help overcome these barriers. The alignment of national qualification systems with European frameworks such as the EQF and ECTS is a significant enabler, as it helps ensure that qualifications are comparable and recognised across borders. Similarly, the use of digital platforms for certification and recognition is a powerful enabler of mutual recognition. Digital tools not only increase transparency and accessibility but also make it easier for qualifications to be shared and recognised across Europe, thereby supporting mobility and employability.

Another important enabler is the increasing emphasis on lifelong learning and inclusive education. National and EU policies that promote lifelong learning and recognise diverse learning pathways, including non-formal and informal learning, help to create a more inclusive certification system. These policies enable individuals to gain recognition for the skills they acquire throughout their lives, ensuring that they can participate in the labour market and continue to develop professionally.

8.2.2 Improvement proposals

To enhance mutual recognition and the integration of qualifications across Europe, several improvements are necessary. One of the most important steps is to increase alignment with European standards. While frameworks like the EQF have made significant progress in harmonising qualifications, there is still work to be done to ensure that national certification systems are fully aligned with European standards. This alignment would help reduce discrepancies in how qualifications are assessed and recognised, making it easier for individuals to have their competencies recognised across Member States.

Another critical improvement is the need to strengthen the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. This includes expanding the use of RPL and developing clearer guidelines for assessing and validating competencies gained through non-traditional learning pathways. By recognising the value of informal learning, we can ensure that individuals who have gained

significant experience outside formal education systems can access certification opportunities and further career advancement.

Additionally, there is a need to simplify certification application process, especially for smaller organisations in the SE. Simplifying the administrative procedures and providing more guidance and support during the application process would make it easier for a wider range of organisations to participate in certification schemes. This could involve streamlining documentation requirements, offering technical assistance, or reducing the overall complexity of the process.

Promoting cross-border collaboration is also key to improving mutual recognition. By encouraging stronger cooperation between certification bodies, national governments, and European institutions, we can create a more integrated and efficient certification system. Sharing best practices and developing joint strategies for recognition will lead to a more cohesive European certification landscape.

Finally, increasing funding opportunities for certification in the SE is essential. To ensure that individuals and organisations in the SE can access high-quality training and certification, it is important to expand funding options through EU programmes, national government initiatives, or private sector partnerships. This will provide the necessary financial support to enable more individuals and organisations to benefit from certification opportunities.

To conclude, enhancing mutual recognition and European integration of qualifications requires a multi-faceted approach that addresses the barriers while leveraging the enablers. By aligning national systems with European frameworks, recognising diverse learning pathways, simplifying process, promoting cross-border cooperation, and increasing funding opportunities, Europe can create a more inclusive, effective, and efficient certification system that supports the mobility and professional development of individuals within the Social Economy.

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10. Appendices

Appendix 1: Key Definitions

To establish a clear understanding of the certification process and its underlying principles, it is important to define several key terms that are central to this report. These terms, which range from the concept of certification to Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), provide the foundation for understanding the mechanisms through which competences are validated and recognised in the context of the Social Economy (SE).

Certification refers to the formal process through which an individual's competence in a specific area is officially recognised. It typically involves an assessment of knowledge, skills, and abilities against predefined criteria, and the awarding of a certificate or other formal credential. Certification serves as proof that an individual has met the required standards in a specific area of knowledge or skill, making it an essential tool for increasing the employability of individuals and ensuring the quality of training programmes.

Recognition, in the context of this report, refers to the official acceptance of a qualification or competence by an organisation, institution, or employer. This recognition ensures that the skills and qualifications obtained by an individual are acknowledged and valued within the labour market or educational system. Recognition plays a crucial role in facilitating mobility across borders, as it allows an individual's competences to be acknowledged by different Member States or sectors.

Accreditation is the process by which an external body formally recognises that an institution, programme, or training meets specific quality standards. Accrediting bodies ensure that educational and training programmes adhere to established guidelines and frameworks, providing assurances about the quality and validity of the certifications they offer. Accreditation is essential for ensuring that certifications are meaningful, comparable, and of high quality.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is the process through which an individual's skills and knowledge, acquired through previous work experience, informal learning, or life experiences, are formally recognised and validated. RPL allows individuals to demonstrate their competencies outside the traditional educational systems, enabling them to gain qualifications or certifications based on their prior achievements. This process is particularly important for

individuals who may have gained valuable skills through non-traditional or informal means, as it allows them to gain formal recognition for these competencies, enhancing their employability and career prospects.
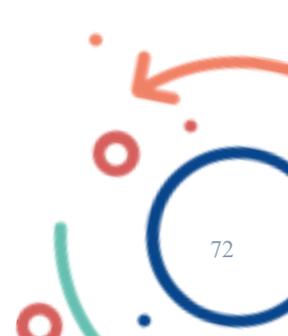
Appendix 2: SETS Competency/Framework Alignment Matrix

In order to establish a list of key skills to be acquired and certified within the SETS training programme, Social Good Accelerator has drawn up a table (Table 1 - Appendix 1) matching several European-level recognised skills frameworks (DigComp 2.2, Entrecomp and GreenComp, which was ultimately rejected), and their adaptation to the SSE within the framework of third-party programmes (in particular the EU3Digital project, which proposed an adaptation of DigComp to third sector structures) and its Social Tech Academy project funded by the Erasmus+ Agency (2022-2025). In addition, a benchmark of existing AI training courses has been established (Table 2 - Annex 2).

These tables are included in the annex and were used as a reference for writing the syllabuses for the three SETS training courses, in order to offer content that will enable progress to be made on these referenced and certifiable skills at European level. The question that arises with regard to certification is how to strike the right balance between long training courses linked to vocational training (registered in the national register of professional or specific skills of the various member countries and subject to Europass equivalence) and micro-certifications adapted to short training courses.

- Sample Certification Factsheets
- Digital Badge Templates
- Additional Resources (links, guides, tools)

Appendix 3. Assessment and Skills Certification Registers at a National Level

To better understand how competencies are assessed and validated across different European contexts, it is essential to examine the frameworks, policies, and practices used in various Member States. This section presents a comparative table that highlights the assessment and validation methods used in France, Italy, Slovenia, and Belgium. The comparison will focus on governance, policy support, funding and recognition models, providing an in-depth understanding of how each country manages the certification and recognition of competences, particularly concerning the Social Economy (SE). Additionally, this section will explore the necessary adaptations required to make these frameworks and process more relevant for the unique needs of the SE sector.

France

In France, the governance of the certification system is heavily influenced by the state, with the Répertoire National des Certifications Professionnelles (RNCP) and Répertoire Spécifique (RS) playing key roles in establishing and monitoring qualifications. The French government, in collaboration with accreditation bodies, ensures that certifications align with the country's labour market needs and educational standards. Policy support comes from several national initiatives, such as Qualiopi, which ensures the quality of training programmes, particularly those receiving public funding.

The funding for certification and training programmes in France often comes from both public and private sources. Public funding for training programmes is available through the Compte Personnel de Formation (CPF), which allows individuals to use their personal training account to finance certifications. Additionally, the Pôle Emploi (Employment Agency) and Opco (Opérateurs de Compétences) provide financial support for individuals and organisations seeking to improve their skills.

In terms of recognition models, the French certification system is well-integrated with European frameworks such as EQF and ECTS, ensuring the portability of qualifications across Member States. The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is also a key component of the French system,

allowing individuals to have their informal learning and work experience validated for certification.

For the Social Economy Sector, adaptations are necessary to ensure that training programmes and certifications meet the specific needs of social enterprises, cooperatives, and other organisations within the SE. This includes developing training pathways that recognise the social impact dimension of the SE, as well as integrating social innovation and entrepreneurship competences.

Italy

In Italy, the governance of certification is decentralised, with regional authorities playing a significant role in overseeing the implementation of certification frameworks. The national system is based on the EQF but is also influenced by regional variations in training needs. Policy support for certifications comes from initiatives such as the National Agency for the Development of Vocational Education and Training (ANPAL), which supports the recognition of qualifications and ensures they meet European standards.

Funding for certification programmes is provided through various channels, including national programmes and European funds such as the European Social Fund (ESF). These funds support individuals in accessing certifications, particularly in areas related to entrepreneurial skills and digital competences.

Italy faces challenges in the recognition models, particularly regarding non-university certifications, which are often not institutionalised or widely recognised outside specific sectors. However, the increasing alignment with the EQF and ECTS has started to improve the recognition of non-degree qualifications, especially for digital and technical skills.

For the Social Economy Sector, adaptations are needed to ensure that the non-formal and informal learning pathways in this sector are recognised. Italy could benefit from greater integration of social entrepreneurship and social innovation into its certification models, ensuring that the social impact dimensions of the SE are formally recognised and valued.

Slovenia

Slovenia presents a unique case when it comes to the governance of certification systems. While the country follows European frameworks like EQF, ECTS, and Europass, the recognition of

non-university certifications is still in its infancy. Policy support for certifications, particularly in non-degree education, is limited. The government has recently made efforts to modernise and diversify the certification system through the establishment of National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) and initiatives supported by the European Social Fund.

Funding for certification in Slovenia is generally limited and often targeted at formal educational pathways, with less attention paid to non-formal or informal learning. However, organisations involved in training and education, particularly in the digital and entrepreneurial sectors, may access funding through European programmes or private sponsorship.

The recognition models in Slovenia face challenges in non-university education. Many of the certifications in fields like digital skills or entrepreneurial competences are not institutionalised, and the local labour market is slow to recognise them, limiting their effectiveness. However, efforts are being made to address this gap, particularly through initiatives that align Slovenia's system more closely with European frameworks.

For the SE sector, it is crucial to adapt the Slovenian certification system to accommodate the unique characteristics of the sector. This includes recognising the value of non-formal and informal learning and ensuring that social enterprises and cooperatives can offer certifications that reflect their specific work, particularly in social innovation and green entrepreneurship.

Belgium

Belgium's governance of certifications is characterised by a dual system, with regional authorities in Flanders, Wallonia, and Brussels overseeing the implementation of training and certification programmes. These regions have their own specific approaches to training and recognition, but they all align with European frameworks such as EQF and ECTS. Policy support for certifications comes from both national and regional policies, as well as the Flemish Training Fund and Wallonia's Office for Vocational Training, which aim to improve access to education and training.

In terms of funding, Belgium provides access to both public and private funding for training programmes. The Social Fund and regional government grants support training in various sectors, including entrepreneurial skills and digital competencies. The availability of funding is

particularly beneficial for individuals seeking to upskill in these areas, enabling them to access certification opportunities that might otherwise be unaffordable.

The recognition models in Belgium are highly developed, with certifications in both the formal and informal sectors being widely recognised across the country and by other European nations. Belgium has also been a leader in integrating RPL into its education system, allowing individuals to gain formal recognition for competencies acquired through non-traditional learning pathways.

For the Social Economy Sector, Belgium's certification system is already quite well-suited, but adaptations are necessary to enhance the recognition of the sector's unique contributions. This includes ensuring that the social impact of the SE is recognised within the framework of professional certifications and incorporating social innovation into the accreditation process.
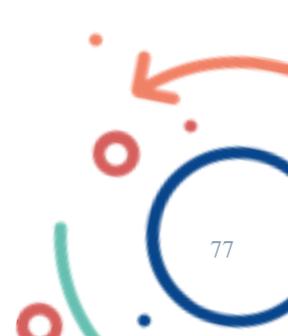
Appendix 4: Comparative Table of European Training Quality Certification Systems

Criteria	EQF (European Qualifications Framework)	CERAQ/EQAVET (European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET)
Full name	European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF)	European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET (EQAVET)
Official adoption	April 2008	June 2009
Source texts/decisions	Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (2008/C 111/01)1256. Council Recommendation of 22 May 2017 on the EQF (2017/C 189/03)125.	Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) (2009/C 155/01)34.
Implementation & timetable	Launched in early 2000, officially adopted in April 2008 (Recommendation 2008/C 111/01), generalised from 2012, revised in 2017 (2017/C 189/03)1.	Adopted: 18 June 2009 (Recommendation 2009/C 155/01), deployed since 2009, continuously updated by guides, reports and European projects (e.g. peer review, SELFIE)345.
Main objective	Facilitate the comparability, transparency and recognition of qualifications and diplomas between European countries, for the mobility of learners and workers14.	Harmonising and improving the quality of vocational training systems in Europe, strengthening mutual trust and the transnational recognition of qualifications345.

Nature	8-level reference framework based on learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, competences)[1].	Quality assurance system based on a continuous improvement cycle (planning, implementation, evaluation, revision) and common [indicators45].
Scope of application	All qualifications (general, vocational, continuing, university, VET, etc.) throughout [life1].	Initial and continuing vocational training (VET), training schemes and organisations, European [projects34].
Implementation and timetable	**Launch**: Cooperation began in the early 2000s, and was officially adopted by the European Parliament and the Council in April 20081256. **Entry into force**: 2008 (Recommendation 2008/C 111/01) **Generalisation**: Member States were required to reference their national qualifications to the EQF from 2012 for all new qualifications [issued26]. **Revision**: New Council recommendation in 2017 to strengthen alignment and [transparency125].	**Adoption**: 18 June 2009 by the European Parliament and the Council (Recommendation 2009/C 155/01)[34]. **Deployment**: Since 2009, Member States have been invited to incorporate the EQAVET framework into their national policies on initial and continuing vocational [training34]. **Update**: Various reports and guides published regularly to support implementation, in particular by the EQAVET network.
How it works	Allows each national qualification to be placed on a common European scale (levels 1 to 8), promotes the alignment of national frameworks and facilitates [mobility14].	Provides criteria, indicators and a methodology for assessing and improving the quality of training, encourages peer review and continuous [improvement345].
Recognition	Facilitates the recognition of qualifications and professional and academic mobility in Europe, including transnational [recruitment1].	Facilitates confidence in the quality of training and mutual recognition between countries, supports the credibility of [EQF/CEC35-aligned] qualifications.
Example of use	A diploma or national qualification (e.g. RNCP in France) is positioned at an EQF level so that it is understood and recognised throughout the [EU1].	A training organisation implements a quality approach in accordance with EQAVET to guarantee the quality of its services and promote its certifications at European [level4].

Link with Europass	EQF qualifications are integrated into Europass and European Digital Credentials, facilitating portability and transparency1.	Information on the quality of organisations and qualifications is also promoted in Europass and European databases, boosting confidence in mobility45.
Typology of levels	8 levels, from elementary (basic knowledge) to doctorate, each level described by learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, autonomy)1.	No levels: methodological framework for quality assurance, applicable to all levels of VET, from secondary to adult continuing education4.
National versions	Each country has a national framework aligned with the EQF (e.g. RNCP in France, Cadre francophone in Belgium)1.	Each country designates a National Quality Reference Point (NRP), adapts EQAVET to its own context, and participates in the European network for exchanging best practice34.
Complementarity	Structures the recognition of qualifications and diplomas on a European scale, promoting transparency of qualification levels and mobility14.	Guarantees and improves the quality of the training systems that deliver these qualifications, supports confidence in mutual recognition and European mobility345.

Appendix 5. Comparative Analysis of the Levels of Interoperable Skills Certification at European Level

Criteria	ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System)	Transferable professional qualifications (Europass)	Micro-certifications
Domain	Higher education	Continuing vocational training (VET), sector certifications	Lifelong learning, short courses, upskilling
Application timetable	Bologna Process (1999), ECTS generalised in the EU from 2000, ongoing harmonisation	Europass since 2012	EU 2022 Recommendation, gradual deployment in the EU from 2022-2023
Reference texts	Bologna Process (1999), Diploma Supplement, EQF (2008, 2017)	CEC/EQF Recommendation (2008, 2017), Europass (2020)	EU Recommendation 2022/C 243/02, DigComp 2.2, Europass Digital Credentials, MICROBOL (2021)
Function	Measures the volume of academic work; facilitates student mobility and transnational recognition of degrees (bachelor's, master's, doctorate)	Professional and sectoral recognition Linked to blocks of professional skills and professional sectors. Certification of entire professions (blocks of skills) ; Specific repertoire: targeted skills ;	Attest to skills acquired in short training courses; stackable for modular courses (e.g. digital badges)
Example of use	A master's degree = 120 ECTS credits; Erasmus+ mobility	Level 5 professional qualification (Bac+2); electrical accreditation; Europass Certificate Supplement	DigComp micro-certification for digital skills
Range	Academic (university degrees)	Professional (complete or targeted professions, specific sectors)	Specific, cross-disciplinary or sectoral skills

Recognition	Student mobility (Bologna Process), alignment with EQF	RNCP/EQF via France Compétences, Europass, sectoral and transnational recognition	EU Recommendation 2022, Europass Digital Credentials, emerging European recognition
Credits	1 ECTS credit = 25-30 learning hours	Blocks of skills (variable volume depending on the qualification)	No standardised system; ECVET compatible (VET credits)
Duration	Long (semesters/years)	Long (RNCP) or short (Répertoire spécifique)	Short (hours/week)
Tools and interoperability at European level	Diploma Supplement, Europass, EQF	Europass Supplement, Europass Digital Credentials, CEC/EQF Referenced in **Europass** via certificate supplements translated into English 5. Aligned with the **EQF** (levels 1 to 8) for transnational recognition 816.	Europass Digital Credentials, DigComp, digital badges

Appendix 6. Comparison: European Digital Credentials (EDC) vs European Digital Skills Certificate (EDSC)

Criteria	European Digital Credentials (EDC)	European Digital Skills Certificate (EDSC)
Domain	All types of learning (diplomas, micro-certificates, badges, work experience)	Specific numerical skills (basic to advanced), aligned with DigComp
Terms of reference	*European Learning Model (ELM)*, aligned with ESCO, EQF and Europass	*DigComp 2.1/2.2* (European digital skills framework)
Function	Generic technical infrastructure for issuing, storing and verifying certifications	Sector quality label to harmonise existing digital certifications (e.g. PIX, ICDL)
Governance	Europass (European Commission)	Consortium led by the JRC + national stakeholders (ministries, certification bodies)
Maturity	Deployed in 25 countries (e.g. Luxembourg, Croatia, Malta) since 2020. Version 1.8 in 2023 (JSON-LD, JADES Signature Standard)	Pilot phase (2022-2024). Unfavourable feasibility report in 2024; work extended to 2025 for adjustments.

Application timetable	• **2019-2020**: EDCI pilots in 18 countries. • **2020**: Integration into Europass. • **2023**: Major update (v1.8).	• **2022-2024**: Feasibility study concluding that the cost/benefit ratio was [unfavourable4](#). Work extended to 2025 to refine the [model4](#). • **2025**: Publication of the final report and recommendations
Reference texts	• Europass Recommendation (2020). • *EDCI Technical Documentation* (Github). • eIDAS Regulation (electronic signatures).	• Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027 (Action 9). • JRC Report on EDSC (2024). • DigComp 2.2 (2022).
Interoperability	• JSON-LD format and W3C standards. • Compatible with digital wallets (e.g. EBSI). • ESCO/EQF aligned metadata.	• Strict alignment with DigComp • Planned link with Europass and EQF via EDC.
Complementarities	• Hosts EDSC certifications. • Verifies accreditation of organisations via e-Seal.	• Uses the EDC infrastructure to issue standardised certificates. • Enriches Europass with targeted skills.

11. Partners