

Micro-credentials as a regional ALE Strategy: ensuring equality in the green transition?

Event Report

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The Gender Equality Task Force

During the European Week of Cities and Regions 2023, **EARLALL**, **EfVET** and **EAEA** hosted a participatory lab on micro-credentials and their capacity to address gender-based issues going into the green transition. The session was moderated by **Gina Ebner**, Secretary General of EAEA who welcomed the panellists and participants and explained that this session was organised in the context of the three organisation's **Gender Equality Task Force initiative**. The Task Force aims to gather partners from the three organisations to launch a series of initiatives that **encourage discussion on EU policies and strategies related to gender equality in lifelong learning**.

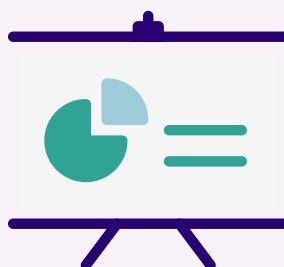


Gender and the Green Transition

The first speaker **Sylvia Liuti**, Gender Equality Expert and Italian National Board Coordinator, EfVET, took the floor to introduce the challenges of the green transition from a gendered approach. Among some of the consequences of a lack of gender equality going into the green transition, the following aspects were highlighted:



- The risk that **the policies, programmes, and actions are not addressing the right problems** and/or not adopting the appropriate/needed solutions
- **Replication of gender inequalities**, thus not progressing, innovating or on the contrary, expanding the negative effects
- **Waste of talent and investments**: having women outperforming in tertiary education, but less employed than men



Download all of the session's presentations



Micro-credentials: what role?

Next, **Liisa Metsola**, Development Director, LIVE Foundation (Finland), spoke about the potential of micro-credentials and underrepresented groups. The presentation focused on **how micro-credentials and green skills training to contribute to the green transition offer opportunities for under-represented groups to overcome barriers to education**, acquire valuable skills, and participate in the growing green economy. These programs can provide a more inclusive and accessible path to careers in environmentally sustainable fields, contributing to greater diversity and equity in the workforce. The potential of micro-credentials, for example for those with special social needs, could include flexible pace, targeted support, customised learning paths and lower cost and time commitment.



Isabel Ladrón Arroyo, Policy Officer, European Commission's DG Employment, social affairs and inclusion, VET Unit, then presented the European approach to micro-credentials and emphasised their potential to reduce the gender gap in education, training and employment. Within the European Skills Agenda, Lifelong upskilling and reskilling needs to become the norm, keeping in mind sustainable competitiveness (in line with the European Green Deal), social fairness and resilience. The Skills Agenda works to meet several goals by 2030, including 60 percent of the adult population participating in training each year notably leading to 20 million ICT specialists and gender convergence in this field.

With regards to the Council Recommendation, "European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability", the "learner-centred" aspect of their design was highlighted. Micro-credentials could offer a solution to overcome the three main barriers to lifelong upskilling and reskilling: time, money and motivation. All three barriers can be linked also to gender inequalities, as time to learn can be limited by care responsibilities, money issues can be linked with pay gaps and working patterns and motivation can be linked to limited recognition and career progression.



Best practices in Catalonia

Bringing in the regional perspective, **Òscar Palazón**, Regional Ministry of Education – Government of Catalonia (an EARLALL member), shared the situation of green skills and gender disparity in the territory. Although Catalonia is the Spanish region with the most jobs involving green skills,



women hold only 28% of jobs in the green employment sector. Building on the previous presentations of the recognised added value of micro-credentials, in the 2024-2025 academic year Catalonia will implement a new national VET system, including “Level A – Micro trainings” equating to micro-credentials. Each “micro training” must be linked with the learning outcomes accredited by one of the higher lines of professional training.

Group discussion: whose role to ensure gender equality in the green transition?

The discussions on the potential of micro-credential in the dual challenge of gender equality in VET and professional insertion and the green transition then opened up to the panellists and the participants. **Angeliki Giannakopoulou**, Project Officer at EAEA, split the participants into smaller groups to discuss the question ‘Whose role is it to implement Gender Equality in re-skilling and upskilling during the green transition?’ **Results of the activity revealed a split in the views of participants, with many citing regional and local authorities, education providers, EU institutions, local communities and family units as key actors.** Some of the key takeaways from the discussions included:

- **It is not sufficient for education providers or institutions alone to provide courses for training**, there has to be a will from the individual and interest in learning
- **Gender equality needs to be mainstreamed** into any sustainability or green transition policies at the national, EU or regional level so that the green transition unfolds with a gender lens in mind
- There are different interpretations of who a ‘top-down’ responsible should be, some believing it should be the education providers themselves, others thinking policymakers. Nonetheless, **the importance of a ‘bottom-up’ will from the individual, ensuring training pathways and the desire to gain skills related to the green transition**, comes from the learner.

The session concluded with an agreement that further discussions on the topic should be held, inviting a wider range of stakeholders.