



**Healthy
Communities**

Europass as an option for certification & microcredentials



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1. Context and objective

Within the Healthy Communities project, the partnership explored how the learning achievements connected to the Health Guide model could be documented and recognised beyond the immediate project activities. The project did not only need a simple proof of attendance. It also needed to consider whether the Health Guide learning pathway could be presented as a European, transferable and understandable learning achievement.

One option foreseen in the project was the use of Europass European Digital Credentials for Learning. These credentials are part of the broader European discussion on micro-credentials, lifelong learning, employability and the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. The idea was to assess whether participants completing the Health Guide learning offer could receive a digital credential that is more structured, verifiable and portable than a conventional certificate.

The objective of this report is therefore twofold. First, it explains the potential role of Europass and micro-credentials in the context of Healthy Communities. Second, it records the practical reasons why the partnership considered a common project certificate to be a more realistic and accessible solution for the current implementation phase, while keeping Europass as a possible future development.

2. Europass European Digital Credentials and micro-credentials

Europass European Digital Credentials for Learning are verifiable digital records issued by an organisation to a learner in order to document a learning achievement. They can cover diplomas, training certificates, certificates of participation, micro-credentials and other forms of learning recognition. Their added value is that they are not only visual certificates. They also contain structured information about the learner, the issuer, the learning activity, the learning outcomes and the credential itself.

A key element of the Europass system is trust. A real Europass digital credential must be signed with an electronic seal. The e-seal confirms that the credential comes from the issuing organisation and that its content has not been altered after issuing. This reinforces authenticity and makes the credential easier to verify by employers, education institutions or other organisations.

Micro-credentials are particularly relevant because they document the learning outcomes acquired through a small volume of learning. This makes them suitable for short training courses, modular learning pathways, community training and continuous professional development. The European approach to micro-credentials is connected to

lifelong learning and employability, and aims to support recognition across institutions, sectors and countries.

In practical terms, a micro-credential can help a learner show that they attended or completed a specific training course and acquired certain knowledge, skills or competences. The value of the credential depends on how clearly the learning activity is described, whether the issuing organisation is credible, and whether the credential is understandable for the person or institution receiving it.

3. Why micro-credentials are relevant in the Healthy Communities project

Micro-credentials can be useful at any age and in different employment situations. They can document learning for people who are already employed, unemployed, retired, studying, volunteering or returning to learning after a long period. In a project such as Healthy Communities, this flexibility is important because the Health Guide model is not limited to one professional profile or one formal education pathway.

For younger participants, a micro-credential can be useful when looking for a first job, an internship, an apprenticeship or further training opportunities. It can show that the person has engaged with topics such as health literacy, communication, community support, prevention, access to services and support for vulnerable groups. Even when the training is not a formal qualification, it can enrich a CV and demonstrate motivation, civic engagement and social awareness.

For adults who want to reskill, upskill or reorient their professional pathway, a micro-credential can help make recent learning visible. This is particularly relevant for people who want to move towards social, educational, care-related, community or health-promotion activities. It can also support adults who have experience from work, family care, migration, volunteering or community involvement but need a clearer way to present their learning in a structured and recognisable format.

For people interested in volunteering, a certificate or micro-credential can be especially helpful. Volunteer organisations often need to understand whether an applicant has basic awareness of the field, is motivated and can interact responsibly with different target groups. A Health Guide-related credential can show that the person has attended training on health information, communication, motivation, access to services and local community support. This does not replace the internal selection or preparation of a volunteer organisation, but it can support the application and make the person's interest more visible.

In the Healthy Communities context, micro-credentials can also help strengthen the social value of the Health Guide role. They can make community learning more visible, give participants a tangible result, support personal confidence, and help local

organisations explain what Health Guides have learned. This is important because the project works at the intersection of health literacy, community engagement, inclusion and non-formal adult learning. In such contexts, learning is often valuable but not always formally recognised. A certificate or micro-credential can help close this gap.

4. What the project planned to do

The project considered Europass as a possible instrument to reinforce the European dimension of the Health Guide learning offer. The training activities developed within Healthy Communities addressed community-based health education, empowerment, communication, motivation and access to reliable health information. These elements can be described through learning outcomes and therefore can, in principle, be connected to a micro-credential format.

The intended use was to explore whether participants completing the Health Guide training could receive a digital credential containing the title of the learning offer, the issuing organisation, the duration or workload, the learning outcomes and the type of learning activity completed. This would have allowed participants to store and share the credential through the Europass environment and would have aligned the project with European developments in micro-credentials.

However, the project context required a careful balance between European ambition and practical accessibility. Healthy Communities involved different partner countries, local stakeholders and participants with different levels of digital familiarity. The certificate therefore needed to be understandable, usable and accessible also for people and organisations that may not be familiar with EU Login, Europass accounts, digital wallets or electronic verification systems.

5. Exploratory investigation carried out by the Italian partner

As part of the project work, Eurocultura carried out an exploratory implementation analysis. This included reviewing the official Europass guidance, analysing the European Digital Credentials Issuer environment, checking the requirements for the electronic seal, contacting a Trust Service Provider in Italy, and comparing the expected benefits with the practical requirements for a small or medium-sized education and training organisation.

The investigation confirmed that the Europass system is conceptually suitable for project-related micro-credentials. The European Digital Credentials Issuer allows organisations to prepare credential templates and describe learning activities through

structured information. It also allows the issuer to work within the official European infrastructure, without developing a separate digital credentialing platform.

The main requirement identified was the activation of a Qualified Certificate for Electronic Seal. The exchange with a Trust Service Provider clarified that such a service is available and that the approximate cost identified for the e-seal was around EUR 600 plus VAT for a three-year period. Further investigation concluded that it could be cheaper than Euro 600 plus VAT buying a different e-seal service connected with digital signature. This cost appeared compatible with the available project budget line for materials. The main barrier was therefore not only financial, but procedural and technical.

The investigation also showed that the available information is not always simple for education and training organisations that want to issue Europass credentials for a limited number of learners. The activation of the e-seal requires organisational identification, authorisation procedures and a clear understanding of how the seal is used inside the Europass issuing environment. Additional questions also emerged concerning PDF templates, placeholders, test environments and the practical support needed by learners after issuing.

6. Practical implementation procedure

Based on the analysis, the following procedure describes how an organisation could implement Europass European Digital Credentials for Learning. It should be understood as a practical orientation rather than as a fully tested final procedure, because the project did not complete the activation of the e-seal and the issuing of final Europass credentials.

First, the organisation should define the learning offer to be certified. This means clarifying the title of the training, target group, learning outcomes, duration or workload, participation or completion requirements, and the organisation responsible for issuing the credential.

Second, the organisation should access the Europass European Digital Credentials Issuer environment. This requires the responsible staff to use the official Europass route and EU Login. Before purchasing an e-seal, the platform can be tested to understand the workflow, the template options and the information required.

Third, the organisation should build the credential template mostly through html formatting of the available fields that has to be retrieved. The template should include the project or course title, learner information, issuer information, learning outcomes, assessment or completion criteria, dates and the visual PDF layout that learners will receive.

Fourth, learner data must be prepared carefully. Only necessary personal data should be collected, and consent and data protection requirements should be checked before issuing any credential.

Fifth, the organisation must acquire a suitable electronic seal from a Trust Service Provider. This step requires administrative documentation, organisational identification and a clear internal decision about who is authorised to manage the seal.

Sixth, the organisation should test the seal and the issuing workflow before sending final credentials to learners. The test should verify that the e-seal is accepted, that the credential can be opened correctly, and that the information displayed in the PDF and digital version is complete and understandable.

Finally, learners need support after issuing. Each Health Guide participant would need to create or use their own Europass account in order to receive, store and manage the credential through the Europass environment and wallet. This can strengthen the learner's personal digital portfolio, but it also creates an additional step that must be explained clearly, especially for participants with limited digital confidence.

7. Advantages and disadvantages of using Europass

The analysis confirmed that Europass has several strengths. It is a European tool, it supports the portability of learning achievements, it is aligned with the broader micro-credential agenda, and it can increase the credibility of project certificates. It can also reinforce the learner's Europass profile and wallet, because the credential becomes part of a broader digital portfolio that may include CV information, other credentials, skills and learning experiences.

Europass is also useful because it encourages organisations to describe learning in a more structured way. Instead of issuing a generic certificate, the organisation has to clarify the learning outcomes, the issuer, the type of learning activity and the evidence connected to the credential. This can improve the quality and transparency of project-based learning recognition.

However, the strengths of Europass must be balanced against practical limitations. The system is demanding for organisations that do not already work with eIDAS trust services, electronic seals, EU Login workflows and structured credential templates. For smaller education providers, NGOs and local community organisations, the activation process can be disproportionate compared with the number of credentials to be issued.

Another important limitation is learner accessibility. The credential is most useful when the learner is able to receive, store and share it through a personal Europass account. This means that each Health Guide participant would need to create or use an account

and understand the basic logic of the Europass wallet. For digitally confident learners this can be positive; for others it may require guidance and support.

Aspect	Potential advantage	Practical limitation
European visibility	The credential is connected to a European framework and can be shared across countries.	End users may need guidance to understand and use the system.
Trust and verification	The electronic seal supports authenticity and integrity.	The seal is difficult to activate for organisations without prior experience.
Learner wallet	The credential can strengthen the learner's Europass profile and personal digital portfolio.	Each learner needs to create or use an Europass account and understand how to manage the credential.
Structured learning outcomes	The process encourages clear description of competences and learning results.	Preparing high-quality credential templates requires time and technical precision.
No custom software	The online issuer can be used without developing a new platform.	Practical use still requires EU Login, data preparation, e-seal testing and learner support.
Long-term potential	It can support future micro-credential strategies and European recognition.	It may be too complex for a single short project implementation.

8. Challenges encountered during implementation

The main challenge was the transition from the theoretical possibility of using Europass to the practical ability to issue sealed credentials. The official documentation explains the general process, but the activation of the e-seal depends on national Trust Service Providers and on procedures that are not always designed around the needs of project partnerships, adult education organisations or small-scale training providers.

A second challenge concerned organisational responsibility. The e-seal is connected to the legal identity of the issuing organisation and to the people authorised to manage it. In a transnational project, this raises questions about who should hold the

responsibility, whether one partner can issue credentials for the whole partnership, how the seal should be used after the project ends, and how credentials can remain traceable in the long term.

A third challenge concerned the practical effort required in relation to the scale of the project. For a large institution issuing many credentials every year, Europass may be a strategic investment. For a small project pilot or a limited group of learners, the time needed to activate the e-seal, build the template, test the workflow and support learners may be too high unless a partner or intermediary already has a working issuing procedure.

A fourth challenge concerned accessibility for participants. The Health Guide model is connected to community learning, volunteering, local engagement and health literacy. Some participants may be very comfortable with digital tools, while others may prefer a simple certificate that can be printed, attached to an application or shown directly to a local organisation. The recognition tool should therefore not become more complex than the learning pathway itself.

9. Recommendation and proposed alternative certificate

The recommended solution for the current project phase is to use a common Healthy Communities certificate issued by each partner organisation. This certificate is more flexible, easier to create, easier to translate, easier to adapt to local implementation formats and more immediately understandable for participants and local stakeholders. It also allows each organisation to document participation without requiring the activation of an e-seal or the creation of a Europass account by every learner.

Compared with Europass, the project certificate is less technically advanced and does not provide the same level of digital verification. However, it is much more feasible for the immediate needs of the project. It can be created quickly, adapted to different national contexts, signed by the relevant partner, printed if needed, and shared with participants who may want to use it for work, volunteering, further training or personal documentation.

The certificate should include the project logo, partner logos, participant name, title of the learning activity, duration or workload, short description of the learning outcomes, date, place or online format, and signature or stamp of the issuing organisation. Where possible, it can also include a QR code linking to the project website, the Learning Catalogue, the Body of Knowledge or a short description of the Health Guide learning offer. This would improve transparency without creating unnecessary technical barriers.

Europass should not be rejected. It remains a valuable future option, especially if one organisation, consortium or intermediary can provide an already tested e-seal procedure and practical support for participants. In the future, Europass could

strengthen the Health Guide credential by making it part of the learner's Europass wallet and by supporting cross-border visibility. For the current project phase, however, the common partner-issued certificate is the most proportionate solution.

Recommended now	Recommended for future development
Use a common Healthy Communities certificate template issued by each partner organisation.	Revisit Europass once a partner or intermediary has a tested e-seal procedure.
Keep the certificate simple, printable, translatable and easy to understand.	Develop a shared consortium procedure for issuing digital credentials.
Describe learning outcomes clearly in the certificate and supporting materials.	Test Europass with a small pilot group before scaling it to all participants.
Use a QR code or project link to improve transparency and traceability.	Provide learner guidance for Europass accounts, wallets and credential sharing.
Make the certificate useful for employment, volunteering and personal development contexts.	Explore network-based or third-party issuing solutions for future micro-credentials.

10. Conclusion

The exploration of Europass European Digital Credentials for Learning shows that they are a strong and strategically relevant instrument for recognising learning achievements in Europe. They are particularly interesting for micro-credentials because they combine learning outcomes, issuer identity, learner information and technical verification in a structured digital format.

In the Healthy Communities project, micro-credentials are relevant because they can make community-based learning more visible. They can support young people entering the labour market, adults who want to reskill or reorient their professional path, and people interested in volunteering or community activities. They can also help local organisations understand what participants have learned and why the Health Guide role has value.

At the same time, the implementation experience shows that Europass is not yet a low-threshold solution for every project or every organisation. The e-seal requirement, the need for issuer-oriented technical support, the account and wallet requirements for learners, and the administrative effort required to issue credentials make the process demanding. This is especially true for small-scale adult education and community-learning contexts.

For this reason, the most balanced decision is to use a common Healthy Communities certificate in the final project phase and to treat Europass as a future development opportunity. The project certificate offers flexibility and accessibility now, while the Europass model remains a valuable reference for future work on digital recognition, micro-credentials and European learner wallets.

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