

Strategic Microlearning

Modern Training Solutions for European Medium-sized and Small Enterprises

WHITE PAPER FOR TRAINING PROVIDERS AND POLICYMAKERS





Acknowledge ments

#businessgoesviral

Empowering MSEs to achieve digital transformation through upskilling young employees

Project coordination

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Project partner organisations

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Executive Summary

This document is intended for training providers and policymakers with the aim of sharing experiences, knowledge, and insights gained from the research and implementation of the #BGV project.



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Introduction Education in Today's Market

How education is changing in our fast-paced environment

In today's rapidly evolving global economy, traditional models of education are increasingly challenged by the pace of change in technology, industry and society. The rise of automation, digital transformation and a knowledge-based economy has accelerated the demand for continual skills renewal, leaving both individuals and employers under pressure to keep up.

As highlighted by Shizuka Kato (2024) in her EPALE presentation, global learning systems are shifting toward more modular, adaptable formats that support rapid skill acquisition and recognition (Kato, Global Shifts in Learning - Navigating the Rise of Micro-Credentials in OECD Countries). According to Kato, 84% of adult learning policies in OECD countries now include references to flexible learning pathways and alternative credentials, in order to meet the educational needs of a more dynamic and fragmented labour market (Unboxing Micro-Credentials; Increasing Economic Opportunity and Competitiveness in the EU). An example can be found in Ireland's national framework for microcredentials, implemented through the National Micro-Credentials Pilot: a case that demonstrates how higher education institutions and industry can collaborate to offer short, stackable courses aligned with labour market needs (Increasing Economic Opportunity and Competitiveness in the EU).



Introduction

What needs should we address with our learning solutions?

Today's workers are no longer solely defined by their initial education: their employability and career progression are increasingly influenced by their ability to engage in **lifelong learning.** The EPALE Resource Kit *Empower Workforce with the Right Skills and Micro-Credentials for Lifelong Learning and Employability* underlines a growing emphasis on independent, self-paced learning that can be adapted to personal and professional goals. However, according to the MicroHE D3.1 *Stakeholder Interviews*, over **70% of decision-makers** interviewed in European higher education institutions recognized that **traditional degree programmes are too inflexible** to respond to rapidly changing skills demands.

Multimedia formats, mobile-friendly platforms, and bite-sized content delivery are reshaping how learners interact with educational material (Oxford Learning, 2025). These formats offer the flexibility that adult learners and working professionals need, particularly in small and medium enterprises (SMEs), where time and resources for training can often be limited. In fact, according to a 2019 European Company Survey (Cedefop, 2019), only 23% of SMEs provide continuous training to their staff, compared to 43% of large companies, highlighting the need for more accessible learning solutions.

Modern learning solutions must respond to these challenges by being adaptable, accessible, and tailored to diverse learning contexts.

From a business perspective, especially for SMEs, there is a pressing need for short, targeted, and verifiable learning experiences that enable employees to upskill or reskill efficiently. The OECD and Cedefop note that learning solutions should not only build technical competencies but also support transferable skills such as adaptability, communication, and problem-solving. This calls for a shift in how we design and recognize learning: from one-size-fits-all credentials to agile, stackable qualifications that serve both individual learners and organizational strategies.



Introduction

An innovative approach for independent learning: the case of microlearning

Microlearning is the practice of delivering content in small, focused segments, and is emerging as a particularly effective format for independent learning

As detailed by Oxford Learning (2025) and IACET (2024), microlearning supports better retention, caters to short attention spans, and integrates easily into daily routines. These characteristics make it an ideal pedagogical approach for SMEs aiming to build workforce capacity without interrupting operations.

IACET notes that microlearning can improve long-term knowledge retention by up to 80% when spaced repetition techniques are applied. characteristics make it pedagogical approach for SMEs aiming to build workforce capacity without interrupting operations. The MicroHE Interviews Stakeholders cites the virtuous example of a Dutch logistics SME: with the implementation of a microlearning app for forklift safety training, incidents in the company were reduced by 30% within six months.

When combined with digital platforms and microcredentials, microlearning empowers employees to engage in continuous learning while simultaneously allowing employers to **track** and validate their progress.

80%

IMPROVEMENT IN KNOWLEDGE RETENTION

The Guide to Design, Issue and Recognise Micro-Credentials also recommends using digital badges with metadata to ensure transparency and portability of these skills across platforms and employers. This approach aligns with the broader shift toward flexible, learner-centred education and skills recognition that is gaining traction across Europe and the OECD space.





The Position of Policymakers and Training Providers

Introduction

The 2019 European Company Survey by EU agencies Cedefop and Eurofound explored the strategies of European SMEs to meet their skill needs, with a focus on the impact of digitalisation. The findings show that almost all surveyed managers (96%) agree on the importance of training for employees to do their job. Company managers, public agencies and policymakers are increasingly aware of the need for continuous workforce training. Yet, this training is only comprehensive in 9% of cases, with inconsistencies especially among small and medium-sized enterprises. In fact, the research revealed that only 23% of SMEs offer continuous training to their employees, compared to 43% of large enterprises (Cedefop, 2019). At the same time, the survey found successful examples across all types of businesses regardless of country, size, sector, and competitiveness, suggesting how efficient and scalable training can be implemented by virtually all kinds of enterprises.

96%

MANAGERS AGREE ON THE IMPORTANCE OF TRAINING

9%

COMPANIES WITH COMPREHENSIVE TRAINING

23%

SMES OFFERING CONTINUOUS EMPLOYEE TRAINING



The Position of Policymakers and Training Providers

Policymakers and social partners can have a fundamental role in supporting companies in the improvement of their workplace practices. Realities like employers' associations and trade unions can be of key importance for policies that improve skills use, employee autonomy, and involvement in the workplace. Moreover, policymakers can involve business schools and HR associations to target managers' skills and knowledge, which is critical for implementing these kinds of changes.

This section highlights key perspectives from policymakers and training providers on microlearning and microcredentials, including their main concerns and the benefits of adopting these training approaches. Traditional training models often fail to align with the day-to-day operational constraints of SMEs. As emphasized in the OECD Good Practices Report (2024), policymakers and employers alike recognize the limitations of classroom-based, one-size-fits-all training and are seeking more flexible, cost-effective approaches.

Policymakers

In the context of workforce training, every role that has influence in setting standards, providing funding and ensuring alignment between education systems and labour market demands can be included in the policymaker definition:

- national and regional governments
- labour ministries
- public employment services and European institutions (such as Cedefop)
- regulatory bodies overseeing education
- vocational training systems.

Policymakers are uniquely positioned to shape enabling ecosystems that make learning both accessible and trustworthy. This includes funding initiatives, defining quality assurance frameworks, and fostering collaboration between education providers, businesses, and social partners (*Policy-Level Recommendations; Develop Enabling Frameworks and Legislation*). It goes without saying that the topic of microlearning and microcredentials might be of great interest to policymakers, albeit not without some concerns.



The Position of Policymakers and Training Providers

Policymakers and microlearning

Concerns

Microcredentials are taking the students away from the regular curricula

This type of training is making knowledge more accessible, open to the individuals who don't have the opportunity to enroll in formal education, such as universities.

Microlearning and microcredentials programs can be fragmented and inconsistent across providers and regions.

This is not an unfounded doubt: according to the ETF Guidelines for Designing, Issuing and Recognising Micro-Credentials, without common quality frameworks and mutual recognition agreements, microcredentials can become isolated and difficult to integrate into broader qualification systems.

Benefits

Microlearning can contribute to broader social and economic goals, such as increasing workforce adaptability in the face of digitalisation and environmental transitions. For example, the European Commission's Digital Education Action Plan (2021 - 2027) promotes micro-credentials as part of a systemic response to the digital skills gap (EPALE Resource Kit - Skills Revolution).



The Position of Policymakers and Training Providers

Training providers

"Training providers" is a definition encompassing a vast ecosystem that includes:

- public vocational education and training (VET) centres
- universities
- continuing education institutes
- private edtech companies
- chambers of commerce
- sector-specific training bodies.

Moreover, new actors such as digital platforms and microlearning specialists are also entering the space to meet evolving workforce demands.

Today, training providers are adapting to new learner expectations. Their success with workplace microlearning will depend on delivering quality, relevant, and portable skills.







The Position of Policymakers and Training Providers

Training providers and microlearning

Concerns

Ensuring the recognition and credibility of microlearning training.

As identified in *Unboxing Micro-Credentials*, many providers struggle with questions about how to define learning outcomes clearly, maintain assessment standards, and demonstrate the value of micro-credentials to employers. Platforms such as OpenClassrooms and Coursera are already working with universities and employers to deliver credentialed microlearning that can be stacked toward degrees or serve as standalone qualifications.

The costs of developing and maintaining quality microlearning pathways

Especially with digital and interactive formats, it can be a barrier for smaller organizations.

The relevance, adaptability, and long-term impact of the training.

This is a continuing concern amid rapid digital and green transitions.

Benefits

Many organizations see microlearning as a strategic opportunity to confirm and validate informal learning and gain recognition.

Microcredentials increase adult participation, especially among low-skilled or underemployed individuals, by lowering entry barriers and offering tailored, work-relevant content.

The learner-centered design of microlearning boosts engagement and completion rates; providers using adaptive, modular content report higher learner satisfaction and better progress tracking. This approach facilitates data-driven decisions, as digital microlearning platforms provide analytics that help refine content and better align it with workplace needs (Articulate Community Team, 2025).

Microlearning offers a timely solution for rapidly evolving fields like ICT, healthcare, logistics, and green industries, allowing faster updates to meet emerging skill demands.

It serves as a financially efficient, accessible alternative to formal education by democratizing knowledge and reducing barriers, such as the need for travel to face-to-face training.



The Position of Policymakers and Training Providers

Insights from the #bgv pilot

What is our experience with training providers?



K., Croatia

The #bgv online courses were extremely useful for us at Hartera Robotics. They helped us better understand how to structure communication on social networks and highlight key messages related to our product – the Carpathia robot.

Thanks to the advice from the courses, we improved our presence on Facebook and increased interest in our work. The quality of our posts and the way we present ourselves have improved significantly, which is also reflected in the higher traffic to the website.

We [...] would definitely recommend the courses to other young entrepreneurs.

Profile of companies: In both questionnaires, the majority of participating companies were small enterprises with O-9 employees, concentrated in the 26-34 age range. While the age distribution of employees provides contextual insight into company demographics, it is important to note that it does not necessarily reflect the age of the individuals who participated in the training.

Perceived Improvement in Online Presence: 15 companies out of 19 confirmed that their online presence had improved after an employee applied the marketing knowledge acquired through the course. Only a small number (2 each) reported either "mid" or "no" impact.

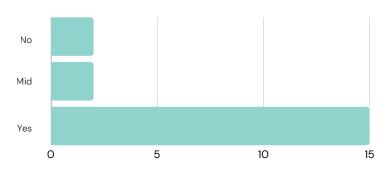


Figure 1: "Do you believe that your online presence has improved after your employee completed the #bgv course and applied the marketing knowledge?"



The Position of Policymakers and Training Providers

Broader Impact on Marketing Activities: When asked how exactly the course impacted their organization:

- Most companies (11) responded that it helped streamline their marketing
 efforts and align them with current trends, indicating a strategic benefit beyond
 individual skills.
- Some companies noted that it improved their marketing strategy and customer engagement (3), while one firm reported a noticeable increase in sales and brand awareness.
- Four companies (21%) indicated that the course had little to no impact, reflecting a more neutral stance.

It is important to note that these were closed-ended (multiple choice) questions, leaving no room for participants to provide additional context or explanations. However, while the specific reasons behind less positive feedback cannot be fully interpreted, the overall trend remains clearly positive: nearly 80% of companies reported tangible improvements. This aligns with findings from the participant questionnaire, where a similar share of individuals indicated meaningful learning gains and increased confidence in using digital marketing tools.



D., Croatia

The company has a website and a Facebook page. Upon completion of the module, the employees and management of the company gained additional knowledge that will help them **conduct campaigns via Facebook.** Also, the knowledge gained in digital marketing helped them create the best **product catalog**, which they successfully placed on their website.

Before the module, the last Facebook post was a year and a half ago, but after the newly acquired knowledge, the posts will be **more frequent and analytically accompanied** by the reach of the target group.





A Microlearning Course on Digital Marketing Skills

The Project

Business Goes Viral (#bgv) is a project cofunded by the Erasmus+ programme designed to bridge the gap in digital expertise between European small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and young professionals eager to apply their digital marketing skills in a real-world setting. Through the upskilling of young employees, BGV aims to empower enterprises across Europe to embrace digital transformation, responding to the growing demand for agile, accessible training in digital marketing.

The project brought together six organizations from Austria, Italy, and Croatia with complementary expertise:

- Room466 (Austria, project coordination);
- SirPauls Digital Agency (Austria);
- Fondazione Politecnico di Milano (Italy);
- CIAPE (Italy);
- PRIGODA (Croatia);
- eWyse (Croatia).

The collaboration resulted in a learner-centered microlearning course focused on digital marketing skills, tailored to professionals who often lack access to formal education or upskilling opportunities.



Figure 2: Homepage of the Business Goes Viral platform (<u>businessgoesviral.eu</u>)





The rationale behind BGV is grounded in existing data, provided by our research report "Social media skills of young adults born between 1991-2003". The complete report is available on the BGV website. In the research, 300 young adults born between 1991-2023 and living in Austria, Croatia, and Italy were surveyed to find out about their social media use and skills. The goal was to gain insights into their digital skills and the possible skills gap to be able to perform social media marketing activities on a business level.

The research confirmed that young adults are heavy users of social media and increasingly interested in leveraging it for professional purposes. However, their content creation and marketing skills remain limited, aligning with previous findings such as the DESI Index. While roles like Social Media Assistant and Coordinator are emerging as critical in the content economy (WEF, 2020), most young adults lack access to structured learning materials that would allow them to transition from personal to professional use of social platforms.

64%

GENZ REPORT HAVING
ADVANCED SOCIAL MEDIA SKILLS

31%

GENZ CONFIDENT IN THEIR WORKPLACE COMPETENCIES

Digital natives spend significant time online, with 16-25-year-olds increasing their daily social media use from two hours in 2019 to three hours in 2021 (European Commission, 2023). Moreover, Eurostat data shows that 80% of EU youth in this age bracket possess basic or above-basic digital skills (European Commission, 2020). Such skills can significantly contribute to economic growth when paired with professional opportunities in IT and marketing: the Future of Jobs Report (WEF, 2020), ranks digital marketing among the top needed professions. Yet, while 64% of Gen Z selfreport advanced social media skills, only 31% feel confident about their broader workplace competencies (OC&C, 2019), highlighting the need for targeted training.

Survey findings confirm this 42% of gap: respondents already used social media professionally, and 77% said they would be willing to manage their employer's social media presence, but many lacked confidence in essential tasks. Respondents reported basic ability in setting goals, building target groups, and monitoring performance (around one-third), but were much less confident in areas like analytics, GDPR compliance, or use of professional tools. When asked what training they would need, participants prioritized social media strategy (56%), copywriting (50%), and content production for target groups (47%). High interest across categories reflects an acute awareness of their skills gap and a willingness to upskill if provided with structured, accessible training. This is why initiatives such as #businessgoesviral can be for young employees to develop expendable skills, increasing their motivation and value in SMEs.



The Course

The #BGV online course "Guide to Social Media Marketing Success" consists of modular, self-paced lessons (units) designed around microlearning principles. With its flexible format – each unit is under 10 minutes long – it allows users to learn at their own pace. The course is completely free and accessible on demand via desktop, tablet or mobile, making it easy for young employees to fit learning into their busy schedules seamlessly.

The micro online course aims to provide businesses and young professionals with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the digital age. The contents are designed to **cater to all levels**, from beginners to those with some existing knowledge. Over the span of **6 thematic modules**, the course starts with foundational concepts and progresses gradually towards more advanced topics:

- Strategy Development
- Target Definition
- Target Group
- Copyright in Social Media
- Legal Obligations

- Data Protection
- Content Planning
- Idea Generation
- Content Creation
- Design Insights
- Meta Business Manager
- Campaigns
- Performance Analysis
- Benchmarking
- Key Social Media Terms

Guide to Social Media Marketing Success Module 1 Module 2 Module 3 Module 4 Module 5 Module 6 Objective setting & First Steps Content Content **Business** Performance strategy finding Creation Manager **Analysis** development 3 Lessons 1Lesson 3 Lessons 1Lesson 3 Lessons 1Lesson 12 min 15 min 17 min 21 min 6 min 3 min **START**



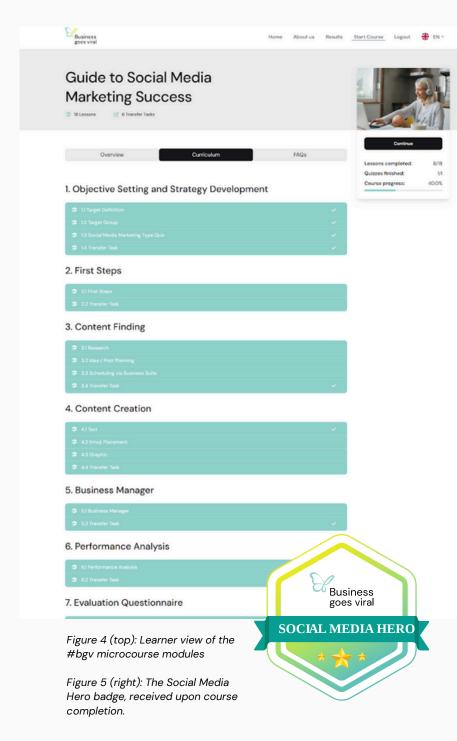


Modules

The modules of the course introduce the following digital marketing competencies:

- Defining brand identity
- Crafting and managing a social media strategy
- Developing visual content
- Leveraging storytelling for engagement
- Understanding digital trends

The micro online course was designed to be engaging and flexible: each unit consists of 5-10 minute-long interactive materials with dubbed text, short videos, guiz, and a minimum of two recommendations for further learning. Learners who complete the course receive the Social Media Hero badge, a microcredential validating their acquired competencies aligned with recommendations on lifelong learning (Microcredentials.eu, 2025). The badge contains metadata on the learner's achievements and is ready for sharing on CVs and social network profiles such as Linkedln. Learners are also given practical assignments, called Transfer Tasks, to implement in their company. For example, setting up an Instagram account for the company or developing an online marketing plan. While Transfer Tasks are not required to obtain the badge, theyt are an excellent method to test and practice new knowledge. After uploading their work, learners receive feedback from a #bgv tutor.







The Pilot

A pilot phase was carried out to test the Online Course with at least 30 Gen Z employees from the partners' countries (Austria, Croatia, and Italy). Therefore, the target group was MSEs with at least 1–3 Gen Z employees. Below is a summary of the steps taken:

- **Dissemination:** A one-pager of the project was created and disseminated to viable companies and employees via social media, email, and phone outreach.
- 2 Initial evaluation: An anonymous questionnaire was sent via mail to key figures of the companies in order to measure the enterprises' social media usage, presence, and effectiveness.
- 3 Onboarding: A welcome email was sent to participants with details on how to access the course, what steps to follow, and useful contacts. The information was also made available in a comprehensive onboarding document, translated into the partner countries' languages.
- 4 Initial evaluation for participants: Contextually, an anonymous questionnaire for employees was sent to participants via mail in order to measure their social media skills and their interest in developing and applying them professionally in their workplaces.
- **5** Access to the course: Before the pilot started, the #bgv platform was tested and optimized. At the start of the pilot, participants received credentials to have exclusive access to the course.
- 6 Coaching: Participants received support throughout all the pilot phase, with one available coach per country ready to help via email and/or phone. Follow-up emails were sent to all participants during the pilot to remind them of the course and check on their progress.
- **7 Final evaluation:** At the end of the pilot phase, participants received a second survey focusing on their opinions on the course, their learning, and the perceived effectiveness of the training.
- 8 Wrap-up of pilot phase: The results from the three countries were collected and analysed.
- **9 Impact measurement:** After some months, a second survey was sent to the companies to assess the impact of the course on their social media presence.



Understanding microlearning and microcredentials

Definitions

Microlearning is the delivery of knowledge in short, focused units designed to meet specific learning objectives. It is characterized by accessibility and modularity, making it easy to integrate into daily routines and workplace contexts. It emphasizes flexibility, accessibility, and improved retention, making it particularly suitable for workplace training and lifelong learning (Oxford Learning, 2025; IACET, 2024). The International Association for Continuing Education and Training (IACET, 2024) emphasizes that microlearning is especially effective in digital environments, where it can combine multimedia formats with just-in-time training.

Microcredentials are a form of certification that formally recognizes specific skills or competencies acquired through short, targeted learning experiences. They are assessed, quality assured, and designed to be portable, stackable, and combinable, enabling recognition by employers and education systems (Guide to Design, Issue and Recognise Micro-Credentials). This recognition is ensured by making microcredentials transparent, learner-centred, and embedded in existing qualifications frameworks. Microcredentials are increasingly seen as a policy tool to enhance lifelong learning and workforce adaptability.

Opportunities

The adaptability and accessibility of microlearning courses make them optimal solutions for company training. The 2019 European Company Survey. by EU agencies Cedefop and Eurofound explored the strategies of European SMEs to meet their skill needs, with a focus on the impact of digitalisation. The survey concluded that companies that value training highly obtained the best outcomes in terms of performance and workplace well-being. The survey also showed that sharing responsibility for skill development between employers and employees benefits businesses greatly. This is linked to the fact that highly digitalized companies tend to perform better, driving more innovation and skill growth. At the same time, businesses offering comprehensive training are more likely to be digitalized and innovative.





Understanding microlearning and microcredentials

Microlearning is a highly efficient and effective learning strategy that involves delivering information in concise, engaging, and inclusive formats, making it easy to learn and highly actionable. It addresses the challenge of increasingly short attention spans in modern learners. The following sections explore the key benefits of microlearning.

Enhanced Engagement and Retention

Microlearning is strategically designed to address shortening attention spans: research shows that digital learners lose focus within 2–10 minutes and that general attention averages just 8.25 seconds (IACET). By delivering content in 2–10 minute modules, it matches cognitive limits and boosts engagement (IACET, Oxford Learning). Studies also reveal video-based microlearning combined with gamification raises long-term retention from 21% to 95% after 31 days (IACET). This method prevents cognitive overload by breaking information into small, repeatable chunks, enabling better processing and memory retention (Oxford Learning).

Convenience and Flexibility (On-Demand Learning)

Microlearning modules are ideal for individuals with busy schedules, as they can be tackled anytime, anywhere, and require less time and effort than longer courses. This on-demand access, particularly via mobile devices, makes learning accessible to people regardless of their location or work shifts, allowing them to integrate learning into their daily routines seamlessly. It does not depend on the availability of trainers or the topic popularity, making this format ideal for niche topics.

Efficiency and Rapid Upskilling

The Cedefop "Skill shortages and gaps in European enterprises" survey focused on European enterprises, highlighting the important role of organisations in cultivating their employees' ability to update their skills. In this regard, microlearning is a powerful strategy. It allows companies to train employees on new skills or update existing knowledge efficiently, enabling rapid upskilling in fast–paced professional environments and fields that are quickly changing. Modules focus on specific concepts, enabling learners to acquire useful knowledge in less time and to align with market trends.

Understanding microlearning and microcredentials

Cost Reduction

This learning strategy can help reduce training costs, as individuals only need to pay for the specific content they require, rather than an entire lengthy course. It can also help avoid unnecessary costs and time spent on traditional training methods (for example, travelling for face-to-face training). Research demonstrates that microlearning leads to a 17% improvement in knowledge retention compared to traditional training methods while also reducing training costs by up to 40% and increasing overall employee productivity by 15% (Cook). This approach is particularly effective for quickly filling skill gaps, as it focuses on one specific skill, task, or concept at a time, enabling employees to bridge performance gaps much faster than conventional methods.

Improved Marketability

Microlearning modules can be easily bundled and marketed, offering new avenues for Learning & Development (L&D) teams to offer courses internally or externally to other stakeholders.

The value of informal learning tools on the market

According to the EU regulations, microcredentials should be officially issued – however, in our case this is an unofficial issue that proves the additional competency of a learner. Microlearning is an opportunity and a validation to confirm informal learning, which is positively valued on the market.





Understanding microlearning and microcredentials

What did our pilot participants say about the microcourse? Some testimonials from the #bgv pilot

- The majority of our pilot's participants work in SMEs, particularly in the O-49 employees range. A few are employed in larger organisations (250+ employees), mostly in Austria and Croatia.
- Many participants had limited knowledge in key digital marketing areas such as community management, online campaigns, performance analytics, and the development of a social media strategy.





Petra, Croatia

"I honestly think that it's beautifully made, especially the applications which are really useful. The beginning is more of a general knowledge, which I think most people know, but it's really useful for people who're not born in the era of Instagram and other platforms. The videos are not too long and are engaging, so I really liked it."

The course gathered strong positive feedback across all three participating countries (Austria, Italy, and Croatia). The vast majority of participants reported significant learning gains and increased confidence in digital marketing tools. Most of them found that learning modules were well-structured, interactive features were helpful, and explanations were easy to follow. Additionally, 80% of participants agreed that they would recommend the course to others.

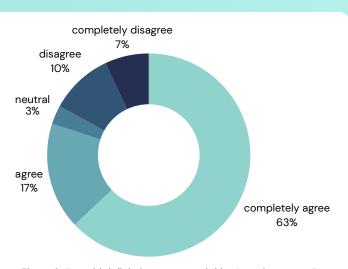


Figure 6: "I would definitely recommend this eLearning course"



Understanding microlearning and microcredentials

penso che sia stato uno dei migliori corsi online che ho fatto, poi mi spiace non averci dedicato il tempo che avrei voluto

è interattivo, interessante, simpatico e non tedioso

18:20



Matteo, Italy

"I think it was one of the best online courses I have done, then I regret not having spent as much time on it as I would have liked. It is interactive, interesting, nice and not tedious."

- Learners can independently and flexibly manage the time spent on the course, which has an estimated total sitting of about 3 hours.
- Participants praised the modular approach, finding it useful and easy for them to progress at their own pace. One participant noted: "The videos are not too long and are engaging, so I really liked it."
- The design received positive feedback for being "clear, functional, and visually appealing", supporting independent navigation and learning.

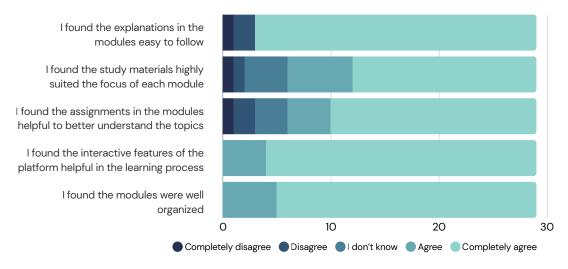


Figure 7: "Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements"



Understanding microlearning and microcredentials

After completing the #bgv course, participants generally reported an increased ability to use various digital marketing tools, most of all Canva, Meta Ads Manager, and Meta Business Suite. A smaller portion remained uncertain – especially about tools like Facebook to monitor competitors and Google Keyword Planner.

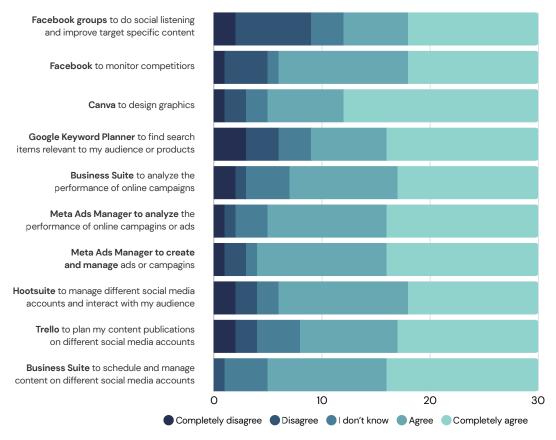


Figure 8: "Do you think you have improved your ability to apply the following marketing tools after completing the eLearning course?"

- In a separate, open-ended question, participants mentioned several tools that they
 were planning to start using as a result of the course. These responses align closely
 with the tools that received the highest agreement levels in the chart, reinforcing the
 positive impact of the course on practical tool readiness.
- Participants highlighted the added value of the course for both beginners and those with prior experience. Some apprecitated that it made complex topics accessible, while others noted that it helped them deepen and expand existing skills.





Implementation and Usage of Microlearning

How to use Microlearning

Conventional company training often involves lengthy sessions and time-consuming group workshops that disrupt work and productivity. Microlearning's flexibility lets staff fit short training into natural breaks, making skill-building easier and less overwhelming.

When developing and implementing eLearning, companies must consider **key** factors to ensure alignment with their strategic goals. We're providing a list of those essentials.





Implementation and Usage of Microlearning

In-House or External Content Creation?

Choosing between in-house and externally-provided eLearning development can make a difference depending on the company's size and strategic objectives. Here's a concise guideline on how to choose.

In-house development

Best for:

Organisations requiring a constant flow of custom eLearning courses.

Pros:

Potentially lower cost if an existing Learning & Development (L&D) department can handle it, with reduced maintenance costs. Internal teams possess inherent, detailed knowledge for needs analysis.

Agency-provided development

Best for:

Organisations without a steady content stream or lacking a dedicated internal eLearning team.

Pros:

Generally faster project completion due to full commitment. Offers an objective perspective for needs analysis, potentially identifying new issues or solutions. Agencies often have more established, "foolproof" development processes and a wider range of tested tools. They can combine expertise from Learning Architects and Instructional Designers.

Key Decision Factors to Assess:

- Cost: In-house is often cheaper if internal resources are available.
- Time: Agencies typically deliver projects more quickly.
- **Needs Analysis:** In-house benefits from existing internal knowledge; agencies provide an objective, external viewpoint.
- **Development Process & Tools:** Agencies generally have more refined processes and a broader array of tools.
- Organisational Readiness: Crucially, assess your specific training needs, available resources (budget, time, knowledge, skills), and whether a project management process is in place.

Implementation and Usage of Microlearning

How to Implement Microlearning in Your Company

The implementation itself can partially depend on the enterprise's size and model. However, the following five-step process can be used as a suggestion on how to include microlearning in a company. It should be intended as optional and informative, rather than prescriptive.

- **Develop training goals:** Define specific problems to solve and behaviors to address. Define learning objectives (What do your learners need to know?) and preferred outcomes (What should your learners be able to do after the training?).
- 2 Create complete courses: Design learning modules (in-house or outsourced) covering full concepts with specific learning objectives for each of them.
- 3 Encourage continuous use: Implement repetition and retrieval practice techniques.
- 4 Ensure easy access: Make content mobile-friendly and available anytime.
- **5 Evaluate Results:** Track learner progress and optimize content based on performance data.



Implementation and Usage of Microlearning

Principles of Engagement

Engagement in learning means active learner participation sparked by emotional connection and curiosity, motivating continued exploration.

There are four types of engagement, and understanding them helps creators craft compelling, relatable stories:

- emotional;
- cognitive;
- behavioral;
- social.

A key principle is to **never underestimate learners.** Content should be challenging, offering puzzles and quizzes, and encouraging real-world application. Effortful learning activates more brain areas, improving retention and creating memorable experiences.

Engagement in eLearning programs should be distinguished from interactivity. While interactivity in eLearning involves actions and reactions (the learner performs an action, the course provides a reaction — for example, the learner selects an element on the screen, and the course displays additional content), engagement can be achieved without interactivity if the content is something the learner can genuinely relate to.

Course Duration is another important aspect to consider. Understanding modern learners' attention spans helps training providers achieve optimal engagement. Research shows attention drops steeply within 2–10 minutes, averaging 8 seconds (IACET). Microlearning's short modules match these cognitive limits, keeping learners engaged (IACET, Oxford Learning). Long modules cause focus to drop; not due to boring content, but because attention naturally wanes over time.



Implementation and Usage of Microlearning

Interactivity levels

In eLearning development, the industry standard differentiates between **four levels of interactivity.** While many eLearning providers use different terminology for these interactivity levels, and there may be slight variations in nuances, the overall framework remains consensual and globally recognized. The nomenclature suggested below is taken from the article from the community of instructional designers, e-Learning Heroes Community, "Get to Know The 4 Levels of E-Learning":

- Passive interactivity: Level 1 features minimal learner engagement, where participants primarily consume information through reading and simple navigation. This "select next" approach uses static text and images with straightforward multiple-choice assessments. While basic, Level 1 effectively delivers simple rules or procedures.
- 2 Limited interactivity: Level 2 introduces multimedia elements including audio, video, basic animations, and select-to-reveal interactions. Assessment methods expand to drag-and-drop activities and matching exercises. This level balances enriched learning experiences with manageable development time.
- 3 Complex Interactivity: Level 3 increases sophistication through extensive multimedia and advanced assessments with branched, scenario-based questions allowing multiple pathways and varied feedback. This level proves effective for teaching complex skills like specialized professional training.
- 4 Full Immersion: Level 4 combines all previous components with advanced gamification and simulation elements, featuring 360° images, complex games, interactive scenarios, and dynamic content that adapts to learner choices. This immersive approach excels at developing real-time decision-making skills but requires extensive development resources.

Each level serves **distinct objectives**, allowing organizations to select appropriate interactivity based on learning goals and available resources.





Implementation and Usage of Microlearning

How to develop a Microcourse

Successfully developing microlearning begins with a clear understanding of the target learners' existing knowledge and the specific gaps that must be addressed. Designing impactful microcourses not only demands careful analysis of learners' needs but also requires the thoughtful application of technical and andragogical skills. The following section explores a step-by-step process for creating effective microcourses.

1 Conduct a needs analysis

As with any training initiative, an in-depth needs analysis is the vital first step in microcourse development. This analysis digs into the specific knowledge and skill gaps within the organization, identifying how these gaps impact employee performance and what outcomes the training should realistically achieve.

A robust needs analysis also considers learners' existing awareness, current competencies, and broader organizational challenges. By clarifying these core issues, organizations can ensure that the planned microlearning addresses true performance needs.

2 Kick off the project

Before content development begins, it is essential to establish operational clarity regarding the project. We are briefly outlining key components that should be in place for the project to kick off successfully:

- Clear definition of the key developmental stages and deliverables.
- Identification and engagement of all relevant stakeholders early in the process.
- Agree on lines of communication
- Streamlined file and email management procedures to minimize confusion and versioning errors
- A clearly documented **project scope** to set boundaries and manage expectations
- Agreement on a realistic timeline reflecting both development and stakeholder feedback windows

Such structured project onboarding ensures all parties are aligned, reduces risk, and sets a professional tone for the remainder of the process.

3 Develop content

Once the needs analysis is completed, content development may begin. Organizations should decide whether to develop content in-house or partner with an external specialist in eLearning development. During content creation, professionals gather details about the audience profile, the desired level of interactivity, brand guidelines, and tone of voice, ensuring each microcourse is both engaging and culturally relevant. Even when handled internally, it is beneficial to reconfirm these elements before development starts to ensure all perspectives are considered.



Implementation and Usage of Microlearning

4 Multimedia

Multimedia elements, such as video, animation, and audio, play a crucial role in making microlearning engaging and memorable. Best practices recommend using concise, high-quality visuals and interactive assets to enhance understanding and retention, ensuring that each multimedia component aligns with the specific learning objective. Beginning in 2026, adherence to the <u>EU AI Act</u> is mandatory for all eLearning solutions. If AI-generated multimedia (such as avatars, AI-created voices, or AI-automated video content) is used within a course, a clear disclaimer must be provided at the start of the training, informing learners of AI involvement and ensuring transparency.

5 Accessibility

It should be noted that microcourses developed for wider public use and within the public sector domain must comply with the <u>European accessibility act</u>. Advanced authoring tools often include built-in accessibility features and typically follow basic accessibility standards by default. However, it remains essential to give special attention to compliance, as relying solely on these embedded components may not guarantee full adherence to all relevant requirements.

6 Provide and implement feedback

Feedback is most effective when it is structured and responsibility is clearly assigned. As mentioned in 2. Kick off the project, define formal feedback stages and designate a single stakeholder or representative to communicate consolidated feedback. This streamlines revision cycles and prevents miscommunication, facilitating faster and more effective iterations.

7 Choose the learning platform

Launching microcourses requires an appropriate platform, so it is advisable to secure an LMS (Learning Management System) provider if one is not already available during course development. Microcourses are distributed through such systems, which enable progress tracking and credentialing.

7 Quality assurance

Upon development, the courses should undergo a thorough quality assurance by the development team or the organization. It is also advisable to do beta testing with a smaller group of people from the target audience to ensure that all is working properly and that the content is efficiently presented and relevant for the target audience.

Implementation and Usage of Microlearning

How to Produce Microcredentials: Tools, Possibilities, Best Practices

Microcredentials are the record of the learning outcomes that a learner has acquired following a small volume of learning. These learning outcomes need to be assessed against transparent and clearly defined criteria, for example, the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), that sets a standard to make national qualifications more readable across Europe.

To assure the quality of microcredentials, it is important to follow agreed standards, such as the European Common Microcredential Framework (CMF). Courses adhering to this framework must:

- Have a total study time between 100 and 150 hours (4-6 ECTS*), including the completion of the final assessment.
- Place at Level 6-8 in the European Qualifications Framework or the equivalent levels in the university's national qualification framework (bachelor, master and third cycle level); alternatively, options are available for course placing at Levels 4-5 (in combination with ECTS).

Open Badges: what are they?

Open Badges are digital objects used to issue microcredentials: they are personal, secure, exportable and readable by dedicated platforms. The Open Badges technology is not controlled by any organisation and is free and open-source for everyone to use. Of course, this means that the reputation and reliability of the issuer (the one who delivers the

course) is fundamental to ensure the badge 'expendability' and usefulness. Badges are usually images (PNG or SVG) with metadata hard-coded into it, indicating who, why, and for what the badge was issued. Thus, it is an evidence-based method of issuing learning achievements. The metadata includes:

- Badge name
- Badge URL (or Identification URL)
- Badge Criteria (Description of the badge, evaluation criteria and alignments to existing learning frameworks)
- Badge Image
- Issuer (information of the issuer and the hosting platform)
- Recipient (the learner)
- Date of achievement
- Tags
- Alignment (standards)
- Expiration date (if present)
- Evidence URL

Open Badges are stackable, even between different organisation's systems: this allows to create a rich ecosystem that individuals can use to build the story of their skills, knowledge, and experience, for example, by showing their badges in a portfolio, CV, or virtual backpack. Open Badges are transferable between different learning environments and platforms, and they can be stored anywhere — including personal devices. Therefore, users have complete control on their sharing.

*ECTS stands for the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System, a standardized unit used in the European Higher Education Area to measure the average workload of study programs, modules, and courses.



Implementation and Usage of Microlearning

Tools for microcredentials

Issuing



MyCred.me

A Wordpress plug-in to reward users with points or badges based on given actions (registration, visits to the course, achievements, completing a topic, passing a quiz...). Combined with the LearnDash LMS, it can be used to host a microlearning course on a website.



Bestr

A proprietary badge-issuing platform developed by CINECA. It is the Italian contact point for Open Badges, as it includes connection to learning resources and endorsement by employers. Free for learners, a service is offered to employers and training providers to design and issue open badges.



<u>BadgeOS</u>

An operating system for fostering engagement and recognizing achievement. Available as a powerful free plugin to WordPress, it lets you easily create, organize and assess activities, reward achievements, and issue badges as participants succeed.

Validating

<u>Openbadgesvalidator</u>, <u>Badgecheck.io</u>, and <u>Myopenbadge.com</u> are platforms that can be used to validate Open Badges to check that they meet all technical criteria and access the metadata they contain

Sharing

Open Badge backpacks are platforms where learners can upload and collect their digital badges – an example is <u>Badgr.io</u>. Badges can also be shared on social media, especially <u>LinkedIn</u>, which includes a section of the profile to collect licenses and certifications.



Challenges

While microlearning and microcredentials can be optimal solutions for company training, their implementation can present companies with some challenges. This section targets the most common ones and outlines some helpful strategies to overcome them.

Motivation

The main challenge in using online microlearning is **learner motivation**: with the ability to freely access content, many employees start courses but do not complete them. Research confirms that one of the leading causes of dropouts in online training is disengagement and low perceived relevance of the material (IACET, 2024; Oxford Learning, 2025). For SMEs in particular, where employees often juggle multiple responsibilities, motivation becomes a critical factor in sustaining learning.

Strategies for motivation

- Promote a culture of continuous learning. Make learning a visible part of organizational values, supported by leadership.
- Communicate tangible benefits. Highlight the relevance of modules to sectoral needs: induction for new hires, low-budget visibility strategies for startups, or process improvements for small manufacturers.
- Maintain active communication with learners. Use reminders, peer discussions, or social learning communities to sustain momentum.
- Create structured spaces for exchange. Encourage employees to share best practices or lessons learned, turning training into a collaborative experience. Gathering learners' feedback is a way to continuously evaluate the modules and ensure that they remain relevant and engaging (Guide to Design, Issue and Recognise Micro-Credentials).
- Foster intrinsic motivation. Connect learning to personal growth and opportunities to showcase additional competencies of the workers. This contributes to building both employee satisfaction and business value (Oxford Learning, 2025).

Challenges

Recognition and validation of learning

One concern is that microlearning, when not embedded in a microcredential framework, can lack formal recognition. Without standardized assessment and transparent metadata, employees' efforts risk being invisible to employers and external stakeholders. This discourages participation, as learners may not see clear professional benefits.

Strategies for recognition and validation

- Define measurable outcomes. Use frameworks such as A Micro-Credential Design Checklist to ensure clarity on what each module should achieve.
- Align microlearning modules with established frameworks. By embedding short learning
 units within a credentialing system that includes transparent metadata (such as
 microcredential frameworks) and recognition by external stakeholders, employees gain
 portable proof of their competencies, increasing their perceived value of the training.

Quality assurance and consistency

The ETF Guidelines highlight that fragmented and inconsistent approaches to designing microlearning modules can reduce trust in their quality. Without adherence to agreed standards (clear learning outcomes, assessment, portability), microlearning may remain undervalued compared to traditional training formats.

Strategies for quality assurance and consistency

- Adhere to clear design standards. The ETF Guidelines recommend a checklist approach: each
 module should state learning outcomes, assessment criteria, workload, and evidence of
 mastery.
- Use peer review. Peer reviewing among training providers and referencing existing frameworks can further safeguard quality. Consistency not only builds learner trust but also reassures employers that microlearning investments deliver reliable outcomes.



Challenges

Integration into business processes and schedules

Microlearning risks being perceived as "extra" if it is not closely tied to workplace tasks. The Learner-Centred Micro-Credentials report emphasizes the importance of embedding learning into the workflow, for example, linking modules to daily performance metrics, project milestones, or career progression opportunities. Even with short training modules, SMEs often struggle to consistently carve out employees' time due to tight production schedules and limited resources.

Strategies for integration

- Embed microlearning into organizational processes. To avoid microlearning being seen as irrelevant, it is suggested to link modules to onboarding checklists, compliance requirements, or performance evaluations. Plus, when aligning training with strategic business goals, SMEs can demonstrate immediate workplace relevance.
- Design just-in-time modules. To overcome time limitations, it is fundamental to design bite-sized, punctual modules that can fit seamlessly into daily routines. The 2019 European Company Survey highlights that SMEs benefit most when training is directly relevant and can be consumed in under 10 minutes. This approach facilitates micro breaks allocated for learning in the regular workflow and ensures that participation does not disrupt productivity.
- Link learning to business KPIs. For SMEs, this might include reduced onboarding time, improved sales, or fewer workplace errors.





Challenges

Digital divide and accessibility

Although young professionals are generally comfortable with digital tools, not all employees share the same level of digital literacy, and older workers or employees in traditional sectors may face barriers in accessing and engaging with microlearning platforms. SMEs must therefore ensure inclusivity in design and delivery.

Strategies for accessibility

- Adopt a universal design approach. This means offering content in multiple formats (video, text, audio), ensuring mobile compatibility, and providing onboarding support for less digitally skilled employees (EPALE Resource Kit Skills Revolution).
- Opt for blended solutions. Blending microlearning with occasional face-to-face sessions can
 reduce barriers for those unfamiliar with online platforms, helping ensure inclusivity across the
 workforce. An alternative blended learning method combines eLearning modules with Alpowered chat. This technology provides real-time learning support and may be a better onthe-spot solution.

Verifying the impact of a microlearning course

To address skepticism about effectiveness, organizations should adopt systematic approaches to measuring impact:

- Define measurable outcomes. Use frameworks such as the A Micro-Credential Design Checklist to ensure clarity on what each module should achieve.
- Apply performance analytics. Digital platforms allow real-time tracking of learner engagement, completion, and assessment scores.
- Link learning to business KPIs. For SMEs, this might include reduced onboarding time, improved sales, or fewer workplace errors.
- Gather learner feedback. Continuous evaluation ensures modules remain relevant and engaging.
- Recognize achievements. Providing micro-credentials or digital badges reinforces motivation by making progress visible and portable.

Challenges

Challenges and recommendations for improvement: insights from the #bgv pilot

The areas of the #bgv microcourse that received more varied feedback were the **Facebook Community** and the **Tutoring Service**. While some participants found these two aspects helpful, especially the tutoring, several pointed to room for improvement and a need to make their usefulness clearer.

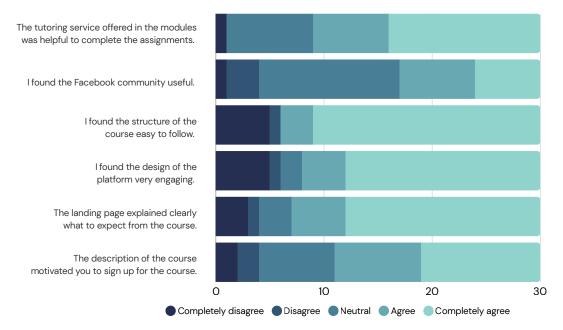


Figure 9: Participants' feedback on the course, platform and supportive features

- A few individual participants offered constructive suggestions for further improving the course and platform, primarily focusing on expanding the course content. They expressed interest in adding more topics to the course, which mainly include Google Ads Manager (in more detail), Asana, TikTok Ads, Copywriting, Instagram for commercial purposes, and what type of content works best for each platform.
- Additionally, one participant expressed a desire for more in-depth examples, noting: "I want to see case studies and a little more detail about types of content and their effectiveness."



Challenges

During the pilot phase, some difficulties were met in **contacting companies** and getting them truly involved in the project. Especially in larger enterprises, several employees did not have easy direct contact with their managers.

In our case, opting for **direct communication**, such as telephone call or videocall (anticipated by introductory emails), led to better involvement of the company managers, as it gave the opportunity to explain the nature of the course better, and show the possible benefits for the company. Real-time communication was then followed by **email outreach** in order to provide managers with digital materials, links, and all the relevant information they might have needed.

Emails were also used to keep both learners and company managers updated about the pilot phase and remind them to complete the course or the evaluation questionnaires. When possible, **more informal channels** such as messaging apps were used to clear some doubts from the participants and check their progress with the course. However, we recognise that this modality is **not viable in all cases**, for example, in bigger companies.

In general, having a **direct, continuous communication flow** with both enterprises and employees, and **being receptive to address their questions and doubts**, lead to higher participation and success rate of a microcourse.



Conclusions

Microlearning and microcredentials offer SMEs, policymakers, and training providers a practical way to keep pace with rapid technological and economic change. Microlearning delivers short, flexible learning units that fit into daily work routines, while microcredentials provide formal recognition of acquired skills, ensuring they are trusted, visible, and portable across sectors.

For **policymakers**, these tools bridge the gap between education and employment systems, supporting lifelong learning and labour market adaptability. By embedding microcredentials into national and European frameworks, and by fostering mutual recognition agreements, they can expand opportunities for learners while enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs.

For **training providers**, microlearning opens new pathways for engagement and innovation. Providers can design courses that are interactive, modular, and workplace-relevant, while issuing microcredentials that increase learner motivation and recognition.

The #businessgoesviral pilot confirmed this potential: participants reported greater confidence in managing social media professionally, improved visibility for their businesses, and a willingness to take on new digital responsibilities. At the same time, it highlighted the value of continuous examples, better-integrated resources, and peer exchange.

Together, microlearning and microcredentials strengthen Europe's culture of lifelong learning and empower SMEs to meet future challenges with flexibility, inclusivity, and trust.





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Contacts



If you have any questions or would like to discuss our findings further, please don't hesitate to reach out to us.

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