

Supporting transparency of skills and qualifications

Digitally-signed credentials

This note invites EU Member States and other countries participating in Europass/EQF/ESCO to engage in a pilot for testing the Europass Digitally Signed Credentials Framework that is currently developed by the European Commission. The shift from paper-based certificates to digitally-signed credentials represents an important step in documenting skills and qualifications in a more transparent and understandable way. Digitally-signed credentials can increase efficiency and security in how any kind of learning achievement is documented. This concerns qualifications (like a degree or vocational training), but also other forms of learning achievement and experiences. As announced in the Digital Education Action Plan, the Commission has begun work on a framework that organisations can use to issue digitally-signed credentials across the EU. The framework, including a set of digital tools and standards for documenting these learning achievements, will be implemented as part of the new Europass. It will seek compatibility with existing national credentials digitisation initiatives.

What is a digitally-signed credential?

A digitally-signed credential is a statement that provides proof of a learning achievement of an individual. These credentials are typically used to qualify for job positions, university placements and more. Digitally-signed credentials are legally equivalent to paper-based certificates across the European Union.

Europass digitally-signed credentials will be **tamperproof** and made up of five elements:



Uses

How does the European Commission support digitally-signed credentials?

The European Commission will support a European Digital Credentials Infrastructure – a suite of free software, tools and services which will help individuals or organisations to:



Issue

credentials and send them to their owners



Store

credentials securely in a single online or offline wallet



Verify

if the credential is authentic, valid and issued by an accredited organisation



Share

the information in the credential with any other person or organisation with just a click

Advantages

Why support the implementation of Europass digitally-signed credentials?

Governments can play an important role in supporting the implementation of digitally-signed credentials at EU level. Engaging in this initiative brings multiple benefits, such as to:

- Improve portability of qualifications and skills between countries;
- Reduce administrative burden for citizens, learning providers and businesses;
- Decrease credential-fraud;
- Empower citizens to own and control their own credentials; and
- Contribute towards digitisation of government processes.

The implementation seeks to be compatible with existing systems already in place such as digital qualifications banks.

Role of Member States

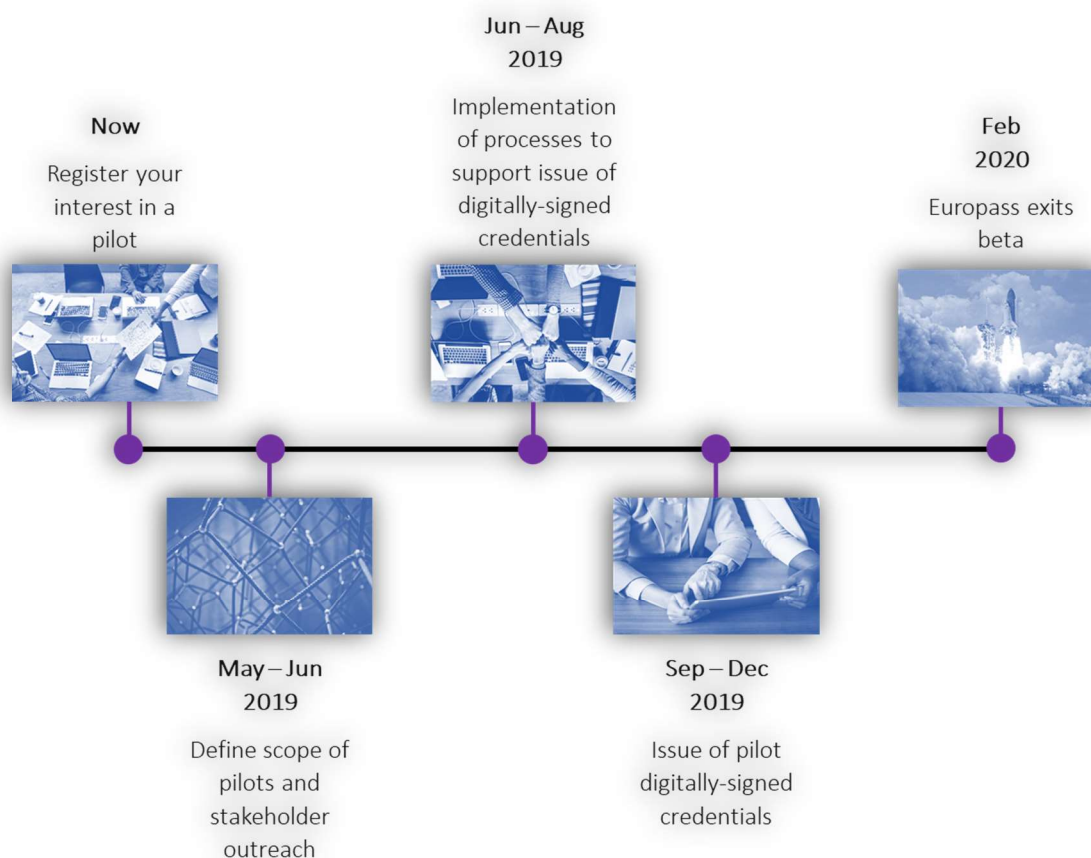
How to support the implementation of digitally-signed credentials?

The European Commission invites Member States to **become an early adopter** to test and build capacity for sustaining digital credentialing ecosystems.

	What can be done?	Who to involve?	What does it involve?
Issue digitally signed credentials	Use Europass standards and tools to issue credentials to individuals for completing government-provided learning experiences.	Any government body which issues credentials to individuals (depending on national situations this could include e.g. public schools or job-training centres).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquire a Qualified Digital Seal in the name of the credential issuer. • Prepare information (in a spreadsheet) on the awarding body, the person receiving the credential and the qualification or achievement for which the credential is being issued according to the Europass format. • Upload the information to the Europass portal, which will automatically issue digitally signed credentials to all recipients.
Stimulate a digital credential ecosystem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage the use of digitally-signed credentials by learning providers. • Support the digital credentials standard in their workflows. 	Vet Providers, Higher Education Institutions, schools, professional bodies or civil society organisations who offer training or certify learning experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise an information-event for stakeholders interested in early adoption of digital credentials. • Invite them to issue digital credentials using the process above.
Support Verification of digital Qualifications	Link your national list of qualifications that are part of national qualification frameworks to Europass.	Bodies responsible for maintaining lists of national competent authorities or national qualification databases.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilise the qualifications metadata schema to structure the data in a standardised format. • Supply information via the qualifications dataset register.

Getting Ready

What is the timeline for implementation?



Improving Adoption

What do I need to do begin adopting digitally-signed credentials?

If you are interested:

1. Identify stakeholders (e.g. vocational training institutions, higher education institutions, or quality assurance bodies) to involve in early adoption;
2. Nominate a contact person who can help coordinate a pilot; and
3. Contact us via e-mail at EMPL-EUROPASS@ec.europa.eu at the latest on 1 April.

The Europass team will then organise a meeting to kick-off the pilot, understand your needs, and support the implementation of the relevant components of the European Digital Credentials Infrastructure throughout the pilot.

If you are interested in learning more about digitally signed credentials, please visit our website at:
<https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/europass>