



# POLICY

## RECOMMENDATIONS



## LEARNING HAPPENS EVERYWHERE AND ON THE MOVE: LET'S RECOGNISE IT!

Today's learning opportunities for young people are limitless. Individuals acquire new competences not only in the traditional setting of a classroom or at work, but increasingly outside of these environments.

Important learning takes place through participation in civil society, volunteering or traveling. These experiences generate skills, knowledge and wider competences that often remain invisible. Learning mobility is one of the key ways in which people can enhance their development as active citizens and strengthen their future employability by developing personal and professional competences, as well as communication, interpersonal, and intercultural skills.

The existing recognition tools are not fully answering to the need for self reflection and awareness, nor do they provide recognition and validation and of the key competences acquired by young people in these contexts. Open badges can innovate the recognition, validation and communication processes for key competences acquired in new contexts, with particular reference to learning mobility. Open Badges also allow for integration with existing tools and across sectors: formal, non formal and informal learning.

## INTRODUCTION TO OPEN BADGES

Open Badge is a digital credential that stores information related to the learning process, achievements or competences of the badge owner. Each badge has important information built within: name, description, criteria, the issuing body, evidence, the date of issuing and other additional information.

In 2011, the Mozilla foundation introduced the Open Badge infrastructure as a new technical standard for recognising skills and achievements. Digital badges compatible with the Mozilla Open Badge Standard follow a technical protocol, describing requirements for a badge image, its metadata, issuing and storage processes. Currently, the international membership organisation IMS Global coordinates the updating and maintenance of the the technical standard. It creates future learning technology and maintains the infrastructure.

A person who earns an Open Badge can share it on social media, attach it to their CV and reliably present their achievements when entering a university, applying for a job or participating in activities for other organization.

***Find more information at [www.openbadges.org](http://www.openbadges.org)***

# BENEFITS OF USING OPEN BADGES FOR RECOGNITION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

## 1. For young people:

Young people learn in different environments and any learning can be recognised by using the universal standard of digital Open Badges.

Open Badge infrastructure enables young people to earn badges by meeting defined criteria, storing them in a place chosen by the young person and share badges in any space and context.

Learners can move their Open Badges across different online and offline environments. Young people can generate certificates to share specific sets of badges and link them to their resumes or online portfolios.

Open Badges can enable a democratic, non hierarchical, learner-centred, inclusive assessment of learning. Open Badges is a user friendly tool which allows young people to have ownership of their learning and evidence of achievements. Badges can be offered by learning organisations and also individuals!

Open Badges help young people to provide more detailed information about their learning and achievements and show the world their unique experiences

Within the European Badge Alliance project, approximately 1000 Badges were issued to 250 people. The participants of learning mobility projects all agreed that badges are a good tool for more self-assessment during the mobility experiences and to enlarge their personal learning process. The badges gave a clear and visual overview of their personal achievements, proof of their abilities and experiences. The different challenges made them reflect on their experience or made them aware of aspects of the exchange they did not consider before. Participants of mobility programmes where the use of Youthpass or Europass was already foreseen, saw the badges as a helpful tool to fill in the assignments of the pass.

## 2. For organisers of learning activities

Designing badge-based recognition requires organisations to review their work and increase its quality, by identifying educational objectives and a way to collect evidence of achievement of these.

Open Badges can help organisations visually communicate possible learning pathways and expected learning outcomes.

By building endorsement agreements with employers or other organisations, badge issuers can build a higher value of their educational programmes and credentials.

Open Badges offer data and individualised information to visualise and analyse educational activities and measure their impact on the level of learning and achievements.

### 3. For employers and other stakeholders

They can more easily identify the personal and social skills of applicants (intercultural skills, tolerance of ambiguity, sense of initiative, problem solving, creativity, teamwork) that are developed especially through learning mobility programmes and non formal education/ youth work activities. Certificates do not give any evidence, while Open Badges do.

Employers can cooperate with learning mobility providers and set- up Open Badges systems based on specific sets of competences important for certain industries and thus communicate the demand for certain skills in a labour market.

# HOW OPEN BADGES CAN BE USED TO IMPLEMENT RECOGNITION POLICIES AND STRATEGIES AT EU, NATIONAL, REGIONAL LEVELS

EU institutions can use the results of the projects which focused on using Open Badges in the field of recognition of non-formal and informal learning. These projects were co-funded by Erasmus+ and other funding schemes and have developed viable solutions to integrate Open Badges into existing tools, such as Europass and Youthpass.

There is a growing number of tools to support the recognition of learning and achievements. Using Open Badges standard as technological solution enables any European recognition tool - such as Europass and Youthpass - to integrate and exchange data and information about learning and achievements captured by using different tools.

Policies in the field of recognition of learning should allow for freedom of movement of credentials between recognition systems. For example credentials collected in a European youth workers portfolio, Europass, Youthpass, should be available publicly with an online link, if desired by the learner.

Europass should allow citizens to collect all the evidence of their learning in one place and Open Badge technology enables to achieve this.

Youthpass should be a learner-centred recognition space where to collect evidence of learning from any learning mobility experience (within the Erasmus+ framework or not), import and export data from and to other platforms, e.g. Europass.

Europass national contact points and counselling centres should be provided with training on the value of Open badges and how to integrate these on a CV and online portfolios.

In order for youth work and other educational fields to embrace new technologies, digital literacy of educators and young people should be fostered. Digital competence should be mentioned among the competences of youth workers to work internationally, defined within the European Training Strategy.

EU and Member states policies should support the development of a comprehensive and open recognition eco-system where learning providers can offer digital credentials to recognise achievements. As part of this process, they should support technological development of platforms and online spaces allowing learners to easily collect, manage and share their credentials and employers to search and analyze metadata included within Open Badges.

## HOW SHOULD OTHER STAKEHOLDERS SUPPORT BADGES

**Employers** should focus on competences and achievements of candidates, asking for evidence of it, which is available through Open badges.

**Universities** and schools should take into consideration other credentials, which are competence based and include evidence, when admitting students or assessing them.

**Educational organisations** should be open for change and for digital competence, embrace recognition and put it on their agenda.

This means transferring their own internal recognition practices to an open recognition system that allows a young person to easily show competences gained through their educational activities, and compare with other credentials. At the same time the use of Open Badges helps promoting the organisation externally.

**Educational institutions and employers** should be endorsers of Open Badge systems and provide their support to the Badge systems they trust, in order to provide value to them.

As in every educational process, in order for Open Badges to be used and appreciated by users, the following aspects should be ensured:

Ownership and information: users need to be informed before the educational project's start about the possibility of using badges and their value, and be included in the process.

Badges are part of the educational activity, not an extra activity: badges need to be embedded in the activities that users already do as part of their learning process

Badge systems need to be adapted to the specific educational activity users are taking part in.

The Badge issuing platform should be user-friendly and interactive, allowing for users to show achievements externally and involve peers.

## EUROPEAN BADGE ALLIANCE IS NOT ALONE!

stakeholders and the European Union already recognised the potential of Open Badges!

***Bologna Open Recognition Declaration (BORD):***  
***[www.openrecognition.org/bord/](http://www.openrecognition.org/bord/)***

We call on governments, public authorities and educational stakeholders to implement inclusive policies facilitating and encouraging the recognition of learning achievements whether in formal, non-formal and informal settings, with bridges between all three. Those policies should ensure the existence of multiple developmental pathways, increased flexibility and accessibility and the inclusion of socially excluded and disenfranchised groups. (page 4)

### **EU's Council recommendation for innovative methodologies of youth work in Europe**

To appeal to young people and to ensure greater impact on their lives, new settings where young people spend their time, such as modern city infrastructure and virtual space, as well as new approaches using innovative online and offline tools (such as gamification, GPS based activities, learning badges or design thinking), should be reflected upon and taken into account in the further development of education and training of youth workers.”

Learning badges are virtual badges in the online space which ratify learners' achievements. Some companies support this idea, including Mozilla, which created an online platform called Open badges. This fits in well with initiatives around the recognition of non-formal learning in youth work. (page 4)

Proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on a common framework for the provision of better services for skills and qualifications (Europass)

Education and training is increasingly offered in new forms and settings by a variety of providers, particularly through use of digital technologies and platforms. Equally, skills, experiences and learning achievements are acknowledged in different forms for example digital open badges. They are also known and used for skills gained through non-formal learning such as youth work. (page 18)

## OTHER PROJECTS ON OPEN BADGES

### **Open Badges for Intercultural Competence**

- an Erasmus+ project, aiming at providing badges for recognising the intercultural competences developed through school class exchanges.

***[www.go2b.eu/](http://www.go2b.eu/)***

### **Trusted Badge Systems**

- an Erasmus+ project which built a number of badge systems in youth work, created endorsement agreements with employers and developed quest-based badge earning system on [www.badgecraft.eu](http://www.badgecraft.eu) and a mobile application

***[www.badgewallet.eu](http://www.badgewallet.eu)***

### **Badges in Adult education**

- a Nordplus project on development of Open Badge system aiming to support recognition of competence of professionals in the lifelong learning field.

***<https://openbadge.blog/>***

### **Learning Map**

- an Erasmus+ project, aiming to develop visual tools to communicate learning pathways based on badges in the field of lifelong learning and adult education in particular.

***<http://hamoment.org/learning-map-a-new-tool-for-recognition-of-competences/>***

**Open Badge Network** - an Erasmus + project which brings together 7 partners to facilitate the development of an Open Badge ecosystem across Europe. .

***<http://www.openbadgenetwork.com/about-us/project-information/>***





**[WWW.EBAWEBSITE.NET](http://WWW.EBAWEBSITE.NET)**

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