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Promote your Soft Skills with Open Badges

About this project

SoftSkills4EU is an international project, that has the following aims:

- To identify the key soft skills needed in Europe,
- to develop new e-validation and e-learning tools, using the concept of "open badges",
- to develop a standardized system for self-evaluation and validation,

- and a strategy for recognition, aimed towards employers, counsellors and other relevant stakeholders.

Background of the project

One of the more important Europe 2020 goals is to enable adults – in particular the low-skilled and older workers – to improve their ability to adapt to changes in the labour market and society. Adult learning provides a means of upskilling or reskilling to those affected by unemployment, restructuring and career transitions, as well as makes an important contribution to social inclusion, active citizenship and personal development. In the European Framework there are many key competences for lifelong learning which are defined by the key skills and knowledge that people need in order to achieve employment, personal fulfilment, social inclusion and active citizenship in today's fast-changing world.

Within European Adult Education Agenda priorities and the Council's recommendations for new avenues for adults; priority will be given to:

- Improving and extending the supply of high quality learning opportunities tailored to the needs of individual low-skilled or low-qualified adults so that they enhance their soft skills;
- Facilitating access to upskilling pathways by making available skills identification and screening;
- Guidance and motivation strategies which encourage low

skilled or low-qualified adults, to develop and upgrade their digital competences and skills and/or progress towards higher qualifications;

- Extending and developing educators' competences - particularly in the effective teaching of digital skills to low-skilled or low-qualified adults, including through the effective use of ICT;

- Developing mechanisms to monitor the effectiveness of adult learning policies or to track and monitor the progress of adult learners.



Main target groups

Job seekers: like first-job seekers, low-skilled, long-standing unemployed persons and unemployed persons with obstacles have no full awareness of the importance of soft

skills and how these skills with proper validation can contribute to their job opportunities. We want to involve especially low-skilled employees in order to evaluate their competences in the way of looking for a new opportunity in the labour market. Therefore, we aim to raise their awareness of the importance of soft skills and how these skills with proper validation can contribute to their job opportunities. We will reach these particular target groups mostly through career guidance centres, employment agencies, competence centres and various programs in our own organizations, etc..

Migrants: a vulnerable group, as they have similar needs as other job seekers, however, they have more specific characteristics, that need to be addressed with specifically adjusted tools and materials, which will be designed in the project. We will reach this target group with the help of NGOs that work with migrants, through programs in our own organizations and also by using outreach approach, because vulnerable target groups like migrants usually don't come to organizations for help, therefore we have to reach out to them in the field.

Adult educators, counsellors: have not sufficient tools for recognizing, evaluating and validating soft skills, therefore they have difficulties when they try to evaluate or validate soft skills with their clients (job seekers), thus they cannot give effective career counselling. We want to equip them with knowledge, skills and tools that will enable them to successfully recognize and validate soft skills of job seekers, thus ensuring a more efficient counselling.



What are Soft Skills?

In contradiction to “Hard” skills, that are relatively easy to quantify by tests, official qualifications or specific professional certificates, “Soft” skills are more general and for them it is not-so-easy to estimate the level of competency. Examples of such soft skills are communicative skills, teamwork, creativity, entrepreneurial skills, time management, decision-making and so on. They are much more aligned with the personality of a candidate, his/her way of thinking, attitude and motivation.

What is important about these, is that they are more “transferable”, which means: useable in different jobs, which is the reason they are so useful. In the end, this makes you more flexible in terms of employability, which is

very necessary for the current rapidly changing job market.

As soft skills are less referable to your qualifications and more personality-driven, it is important to consider what your soft skills are and how you might show evidence of them before you apply for a job. As they are harder to quantify, screening for soft skills is much more difficult. But our project is having a go at this!

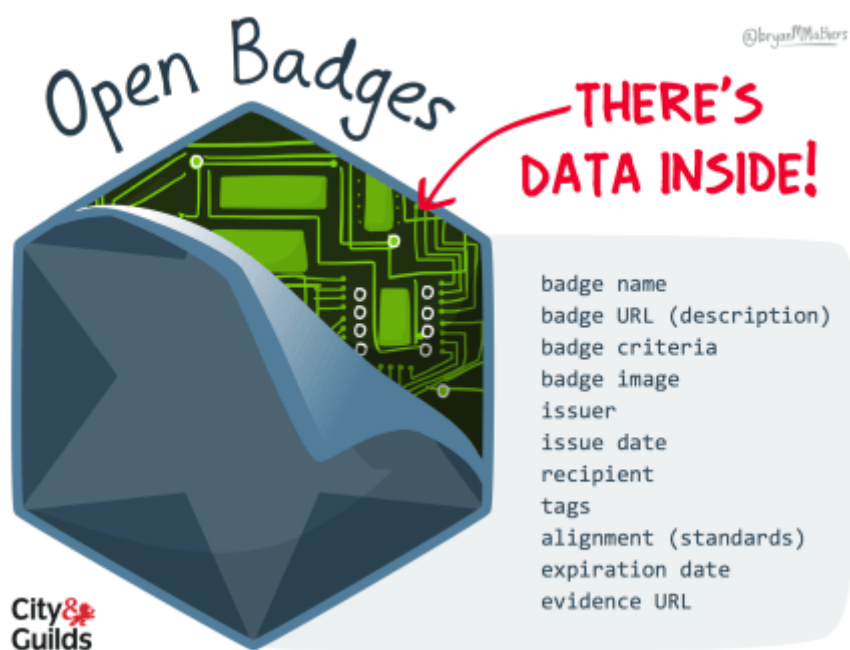


Our first project result “Which soft skills are important for employers and job seekers?”

A survey in five different European countries, resulted in many soft skills that were asked for by employers. We grouped those skills in the following five categories:

- social skills
- personal skills
- organisational skills
- cooperative skills
- creative thinking

Currently we are preparing the "SPOCC Framework", a framework for Soft Skills, with 75 learning outcomes. This framework will be the basis for developing a curriculum and e-learning materials. The complete framework is available on our website through [this link](#)



What is an open badge?

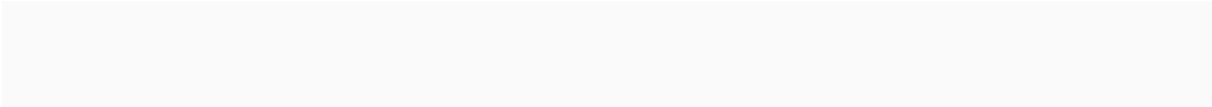
Worldwide, open badges are becoming a popular way for motivating and rewarding learners for acquired skills.

These skills can be obtained in diverse contexts, e.g. through formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Since the age/era of the analog world, badges are a visual representation of an accomplishment, skill, quality or interest. From Sheriffs, Boy or Girl Scouts, to PADI diving instructors. More recently badges in digital form are used to set goals, motivate behaviours and represent achievements in many computer games. This concept was an important element within "the gamification of learning". Open Badges take that concept of digital badges further. It is an open and non-commercial technical standard created by Mozilla, which allows for the creation of verifiable, portable digital badges.

All the information (metadata) about skills and achievements, its recipient, the issuer, and any supporting evidence is irreversibly "baked" into a badge image file. Open Badges are shareable across the web, in online CVs or on social media.

These digital credentials are trustworthy and thus useful for job applications and education admission. The underlying infrastructure guarantees provenance and immutability. Many examples of successful implementation already exist, like the "badging" of MOOCS by the UK Open University, or that of their complete in-company training by IBM.



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