

Greece: Enhancing the Delivery of Guidance and Employability (open badges)

Type of provider

EDUC/OTHER: Certified adult education centre.

Objectives

The EDGE project is an Erasmus+ strategic partnership comprising of adult and further education providers in Ireland, Austria, Portugal, Greece and Wales. The project aims to enhance the progression prospects of socio-economically disadvantaged adults and young people in order to promote social inclusion and equality measures. Specifically, the EDGE Project aims on developing innovative approaches (career guidance, learner engagement strategies, self-evaluation tools, e-learning resources) in the provision of employability skills development. The opportunity presented by Erasmus+ enabled the partners to share best practice, drawn from their considerable collective experience in the delivery of second-chance education. The project explores the area of career guidance and how to identify practical learner progression pathways, including the obstacles (both personal and structural) that they must realistically overcome.

Open badges, as one main output of the project, are e-tools (using the Mozilla open-source platform) that can be used to accredit learner achievement in the area of core skills acquisition, as well as a way of recognising informal and non-formal learning.

The specific open badges developed concern:

- career guidance
- learner engagement strategies
- self-evaluation tools
- e-learning resources

Assessment approaches

Learners have to be registered at an educational organisation that offers this type of certification. Then they use the corresponding e-learning platform and by completing a series of tasks they will be awarded the respective badge.

Target Group

Teenagers, Young adults, Adults, long term unemployed of any social and cultural background.

Potential transferability/ scalability

Transferability is possible. Each organisation has to have certified educational programmes in order to create a valid assessment procedure that can be implemented digitally without excessive requirements that burden the learners.

Summaries or Basic elements of analysis

A summary of the objectives and basic analytic elements of the project can be found in the project final report, presented as a concise publication, as it has been named an Output. Part of the Final Report is the Handbook for Practitioners which excludes from the whole the references on the outputs and how they can be used.

Visit the Handbook for Practitioners [here](#)

Take a look at the whole of the Final Report [here](#)

Introduction

Title: E.D.G.E. Open Badges

Country: The E.D.G.E. Open Badges were developed as an output of E.D.G.E.- Enhancing the Delivery of Guidance for Employability, a KA2 project. The countries that are currently issuers (assessors) of the badges are the countries of the consortium, being: Wales (UK), Ireland, Greece, Portugal and Austria.

Type of tool: Open Badges are verifiable, portable digital badges with embedded metadata about skills and achievements. They comply with the Open Badges Specification and are shareable across the web. Each Open Badge is associated with an image and information about the badge, its recipient, the issuer, and any supporting evidence.

Target group: any individual regardless for its socio-economical context. Both assessors and assesseees are targeted.

Potential transferability: as a tool open badges have the idea of transferability as their core. Through the “Handbook for Practitioners” developed in the E.D.G.E. Project practitioners and assessors are able to develop and issue their own open badges on whichever field and subject they wish. Click [here](#) for the handbook.

Organisation and description of the tool

The organisation “Adult Learning Wales” comes as a result of mergers between Coleg Harlech and WEA North Wales with WEA South Wales to form WEA Cymru, and the subsequent merger between WEA Cymru and YMCA Wales Community College. They provide community education - including community development - and workplace education, while delivering this work through a local branch structure and partnership working with community and voluntary organisations, representative organisations in the workplace, and other providers, including the voluntary sector, local authorities, further education colleges, and universities. The organization supports inclusiveness by focusing particularly on offering a wide provision of opportunity regardless of age, engaging with all communities, particularly those experiencing disadvantage, to meet their needs by negotiation. Learners and branches continue to have a proper and unique role in developing and negotiating local provision and representing the organisation as a whole.

As a young researcher and trainer Sarah K. Jones finds that “Open Badges”, as were better forged during the implementation process of “E.D.G.E.- Enhancing the Delivery of Guidance for Employability” project, are a great tool of assessing and in a way validating soft and hard skills. Open Badges, in the Context of E.D.G.E. project, are e-tools (using the Mozilla open-source platform) that can be used to accredit learner achievement in the area of core skills acquisition, as well as a way of recognising informal and

non-formal learning. As an organization responsible for the coordination of the issuing and use of E.D.G.E. open badges have as an aim to train tutors in the appropriate use of Open Badges by encouraging them to begin using training platforms as a depositories for resources and as collaborative working environments. The platforms provide the tutors with an area to share good practice and offer peer support to each other facilitating inclusion, efficiency and increased productivity. In their path open badges seem a highly efficient and interactive way of assessing foremost soft skills that are not easily evaluated otherwise.

Implementation

“For the assessee the procedure of receiving an open badge can be summarised in the following three stages:

1. Receiving the information on what is needed to gain the badge
2. Providing adequate evidence on the requests of the assessors using the specified assessment online platform
3. Accepting the badge as received by the assessor through an email link, linking the badge to the assessee's badge backpack (Mozilla Backpack in the case of E.D.G.E. Open Badges) that is directly previewed in the portfolio of the user through the specified online platform (moodle and mahara in the case of E.D.G.E. Open Badges).

“As, though, the procedure of issuing an open badge can be, when explained verbally, complicated we created step by step youtube videos and guides available to any tutor willing to use Open Badging as an assessment method.”, says Sarah Jones.

The guides for the assessors using open badges can be found following this link and if you follow this link you can find the guides for learners/ assessors.

Sarah Jones states that “One of the strengths of the method is recognising informal and non-formal learning including development of soft skills that are usually not recognised through traditional certification.” In her and the organisation's point of view, open badges have, also, the advantage of being task specific rather than validating a whole set of skills, which makes them ideal for recognising smaller chances of learning, and this can improve learner motivation. Another great strength of open badging is that the badges are issued digitally, something that makes them transportable making it possible for the learner to share them with potential employers.

“One of the limitations of open badges is that a certain level of digital literacy is needed by the learner and the tutor, assessor and assessee, but while saying that we have seen that open badges can also help in the development of a set of digital skills, as a process” finds Sarah Jones. Another limitation is that for the time being there is a lack of information on the existence and meaning of open badging, amongst employers and the general public and as a result of this there is a lack of value and credibility of open badges. “Having said the above though, open badges are begging to be more widely used and recognised becoming increasingly valued”, is the view of Sarah Jones.

Description of the target group

The E.D.G.E. Open Badges can be considered as a dual tool. The most direct aspect of the tool is the badges themselves as they are issued and issued to the assessee after the finalisation of tasks. The duality, though, of the tool is found in its use by the tutor and assessor, as in the project we developed the

“Handbook for Practitioners” , as part of our Publication” The Final Report”, that provides tutors with a step by step guide on how to create and issue personalised open badges. Thus we can say that the target groups of the E.D.G.E. Open Badges are both the assessors and the assessees.

“The most challenging group of them both cannot be directly pointed out. What we can say is that there are assessees seemingly really sceptical on either the validity of the badge issued or their digital competence in order to work with open badging. As well, our tutors, although willing to try a new approach, them too show some hesitance on using innovative assessment methods that have them producing the procedure...” says Sarah Jones. On the other hand, it has been spotted that people that previously were afraid of formal assessment reacted exceptionally well to the tailor made essence of the open badging validation, making people hesitant to be assessed a fundamental target group.

Policy Context

Adult Learning Wales as a partial state organisation is working and forging their material with the Welsh Government Qualification Framework at hand, thus connecting the validity of open badging through online platforms, namely as moodle and mahara. The tool itself though provides the user with a flexibility on the inclusion of a qualification standard.

Impact for the assesses

Referring to the assesses approach towards open badges, as it can be seen in the evaluation presented in the Final Report publication, we can see that students piloting the badges believe that the OB are a good way to show their skills and can help them improve their curricula and find a job as they are both national and global based which is a good thing while they do provide evidence. Although there were concerns that due to the current economic crisis there is minimal job opportunity, a case that could not be shifted for the individual just by receiving an open badge. What the majority of the assesses, though, state is a belief that in the future they will be more commonly accepted as there is a need for the employers to get to know what a badge is.

Link: ***The E.D.G.E. Project website***
The E.D.G.E. Open Badges Instructional Tutors Toolkit

Personal comments

Although the practice mentioned above is not used widely in Greece yet as it is, we find it crucial to point out that such a method exists in the country.

Interviewee

Sarah K. Jones works as a Quality and qualifications assistant at Addysg Oedolion Cymru/Adult Learning Wales and has worked as a researcher and developer of the E.D.G.E. Open Badges during the implementation period of E.D.G.E. Project.