O1 - OPEN RECOGNITION FRAMEWORK

Validation of the Open Recognition Framework, developed for the Erasmus+ project MIRVA: Making Informal Recognition Visible and Actionable
This publication was produced within the framework of MIRVA: Making Informal Recognition Visible and Actionable, an Erasmus+ KA2 project (2017-2020).

The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.
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Introduction

The objective of the Open Recognition Framework is twofold:

1. Identify the components of recognition ecosystems to understand how to make them more open;
2. Empower individuals and communities to take a leading role in the design, implementation and operation of Open Recognition Ecosystems.

We are now familiar with the idea that most of what we learn during a lifetime takes place outside of institutions of formal education and is not limited to the official curriculum. The terms used to describe these forms of learning are formal learning, the learning that has been formalised and institutionalised and informal learning, the learning that takes place outside of institutions of formal education\(^1\), in “real life.” What the Open Recognition Framework is exploring are the ideas of formal and informal recognition, i.e. the recognition obtained when attending a formal education programme (e.g. grades, certificates, diplomas), and the recognition obtained for something learned through personal study, work or social interaction.

Whilst formal learning leads to formal recognition, i.e. the delivery of credentials that one can display as evidence of ones achievements, informal learning generally leads to informal recognition, i.e a form of recognition that is not captured in a visible credential and therefore not easy to display beyond a limited circle of friends, colleagues or peers. Said otherwise, formal recognition has the property to be globally visible, while informal recognition has the property to be globally invisible\(^2\). The other property of informal recognition is that it is not controlled by any institution, which is one of the reasons why it is generally ignored\(^3\).

But the issue of recognition is not limited to the recognition of learning: when Axel Honneth states\(^4\) “recognition precedes knowledge,” i.e. that our ability to know depends on our ability to recognise, one of the implications might be that schooling years should be dedicated to nurturing in every pupil and student the ability to recognise. Yet, a key component of formal schooling is precisely the compliance to and acceptance of the asymmetry between those who have the legitimacy to recognise and those who can only claim to be recognised. While the power of the teacher as “the person who knows” facing “ignorants” has been challenged, his/her power as the sole actor in the ecosystem with the legitimacy to recognise has remained unchallenged. This has probably been further reinforced with the development of curricula and competency frameworks that are the normative basis of formal recognition.

If the only possible recognition is the alignment to official norms, some of which were defined during the last century, how can we achieve progressive education:

"The principal goal of education in the schools should be creating men and women who are capable of doing new things, not simply repeating what other generations have done; men and women who are creative, inventive and discoverers, who can be critical and verify, and not accept, everything they are offered."\(^5\)

\(^1\) We also find referenced to non-formal learning to describe learning that is organised, like evening classes, that take place outside of the formal education system.

\(^2\) Of course, there are exceptions, like when people get their prior learning recognised by an institution of formal education (Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition) or when someone receives a certificate from an employer, but overwhelmingly, informal recognition remains invisible.

\(^3\) One of the recurring questions when discussing Open Badges is: “what is the value of an Open Badge if it issued by a person and not an institution?” The question contains the implicit statement that individuals should not be trusted and that their recognition has little or no value.

\(^4\) “Anerkennen geht dem Erkennen voraus”

\(^5\) Jean Piaget, Education for Democracy, Proceedings from the Cambridge School Conference on Progressive Education
How to recognise those who are not prepared to continue “simply repeating what other generations have done” when the recognition ecosystem is precisely based on recognising those who are “simply repeating what other generations have done” (as captured in curricula and competency frameworks)?

The Open Recognition Framework is an attempt at providing an instrument that individuals and communities can exploit to develop Open Recognition ecosystems as places where they are on a par with institutions, where informal recognition is on a par with formal recognition.

The Open Recognition Framework will be further developed in a series of guidelines that will be produced in 2019 and 2020:

- Guidelines for Communities & Individuals
- Guidelines for Organisations & Practitioners
- Guidelines for Technology Providers & Clients
- Guidelines for linking informal recognition with frameworks
1 What is Open Recognition?

In this section we are exploring approaches to the definition of Open Recognition.

What is Open Recognition?

[The word “open” is associated to a number of things (c.f. picture) such as learning, knowledge, educational resources, etc. It is only recently that it has been associated to recognition. It is the Bologna Open Recognition Declaration (2016) that coined*** the term Open Recognition with the meaning it has in this document. The term was later referenced in Opening up Education, a document produced by the Joined Research Centre of the European Commission. Unfortunately, this document reduces recognition to validation, certification and credentialing, which are ancillary forms of recognition: recognition is possible without any validation, certification or assessment, and does not have to be contained in a credential document to exist.] <merge with next>

Open Recognition is a concept coined in 2016 with the publication of the Bologna Open Recognition Declaration, “a call for a universal open architecture for the recognition of lifelong and lifewide learning achievements”. It is part of a wider group of open things that comprises open science, open knowledge, open learning, open educational resources (OER), open data, open standards, open identity, open society and several more, in particular Open Badges.

“Open Badges, the open standard for the recognition of learning achievements has proved the power of a simple, affordable, resilient and trustworthy technology to create an open recognition ecosystem working across countries, educational sectors, work, social environments and technologies.” (ibid.)

Without Open Badges the concept of Open Recognition might not have emerged and be adopted by an ever increasing number of individuals and organisations across the world.

To establish a definition of Open Recognition, it might be helpful to first have look at the definition of other open things, for example Open Learning:

“an innovative movement in education that emerged in the 1970s and evolved into fields of practice and study. The term refers generally to activities that either enhance learning opportunities within formal education systems or broaden learning opportunities beyond formal education systems.” Source Wikipedia, highlights are mine.

And Open Science, defined by Foster as:

“the practice of science in such a way that others can collaborate and contribute, where research data, lab notes and other research processes are freely available, under terms that enable reuse, redistribution and reproduction of the research and its underlying data and methods.”

Or Open Educational Resources (OER) defined by Unesco as:

“teaching, learning and research materials in any medium – digital or otherwise – that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits no-cost access, use, adaptation and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions.”

We have here three definitions of openness using different terms relevant to their contexts:

- A movement for Open Learning
- A practice for Open Science
- A license for OERs

A definition of Open Recognition should combine several terms; it is:

- a movement emerging from the development of
● a practice, making informal learning visible, enabled by the adoption of
● a tool, the Open Badges, based on
● a license, the Open Badges standard.

Transposing the above into a definition could lead to:

**Open Recognition** is a *movement born from the practice of Open Badges, exploring and promoting practices, tools and policies enhancing and broadening the opportunities for everybody, individuals and communities to be recognised and contribute to the recognition of others*. (the underlined part is explained below)

Initially developed by the Mozilla Foundation and the MacArthur Foundation, Open Badges played a significant role in instrumenting an emerging *practice*, the recognition of a form of learning that, until their invention, remained mostly invisible—unlike formal learning and its paraphernalia of diplomas and certificates.

But there is more to that story: once we had at our disposal an instrument making informal learning visible, the very same instrument had the capacity to make *informal recognition* visible. While an arcane distinction at first sight, it is of critical importance to understand to its full extent what Open Recognition is about:

- **Formal recognition of informal learning**, is usually understood as the recognition of informal learning by an institution of formal education. It is the institution that has the power to recognise. A typical example is Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) where work and life experiences can be translated into credits that might count towards an academic qualification.
- **Informal recognition of informal learning**, on the other hand is the recognition which remains *unrecognised* by institutions of formal education. Yet it exists under many different guises, like the promotion to a new job, a pay raise, a celebration or congratulation.

*Informal learning* and *informal recognition* have that in common: unlike their *formal* counterparts, they are not easily *visible*. To be more precise, they might be visible and understood locally, within a very narrow range of action, but rarely beyond. The strength of formal education is that the recognition produced *locally* within the institution is in general translated into a credential that can be seen and understood within a much larger community. Beyond its educational mission, formal institutions of education could be understood as organisations transforming *local recognitions*, by the institution, into *global recognitions* by the profession, the industry, nationally or internationally, depending on the level of recognition of the institution itself and their alumni.

Open Badges offer the opportunity to make all forms of recognition visible, whether formal or informal, issued by an institution of formal education, an organisation, a community or an individual. What was visible locally can now be made visible globally.

The other term to which *open* is associated is in *Open Badges*. Although Open Badges have contributed to the emergence of the concept of Open Recognition, the concept was developed in reaction to the flaws in their initial design (c.f. box below).
Open Badges are neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition to Open Recognition

In Open Badges, what is “open”, is the specification used to create them: the standard is open, only the standard, not what we do with them. It is similar to Open Educational Resources: using OER might reduce educational costs, and therefore open access to those who cannot afford buying expensive textbooks, but that’s all: OERs are fully compatible with traditional educational environments and their paraphernalia of tests, multiple choice questions, grades and exams. The same goes for Open Badges that can be used as a modern version of gold stars and grades under disguise. They have also been used to punish “less good” students by depriving them of recognition: imagine a situation where 10 students succeed in getting a diploma, but only those who passed with Honours are allowed to receive a badge.

Moreover, the first versions of the Open Badge technology, in particular the Mozilla Backpack, was designed with the implicit idea that only institutional recognition had value, so individuals should not be allowed to create and issue their own recognitions/badges. The fact that it was not possible to issue badges from the Mozilla Backpack was not just a technical flaw (that should have been easy to fix in 8 years!) but a conceptual flaw: the technical standard might have been open but its implementation was not open to the whole range of Open Recognition.

To advance towards a definition of Open Recognition, one could state that it is an approach to recognitions that is:

- **Open to People**
  - Everybody is knowledgeable and ignorant
  - Everybody can recognise and be recognised
- **Open to Communities**
  - Communities are places for producing and consuming recognition
  - Recognition is reciprocal—when I accept a recognition, I recognise you
- **Open to all forms of Recognition**
  - *Informal recognition* has great value—it is not an *inferior* form of recognition
  - *Formal recognition* is not a superior form of recognition—it can be non-inclusive, using outdated standards and methods, etc. This is an issue also felt by formal institutions, it is a point where open recognition practices might help and complement
- **Open to the Future**
  - Recognition as a starting point of a journey — not just an end point
  - Recognition as an exploration of a territory — not just a predefined path
- **Open to Innovation and transformation**
  - Recognition of innovative practices
  - Recognition of emerging knowledge
  - Recognition of emerging jobs
- **Open to Technologies**
  - Technologies empowering individuals and communities
From what precedes, is there a way to differentiate between a recognition that is open from one that is not? Is openness a state and/or a process? Are there degrees of openness, recognition processes that are more or less open? Could we establish a standard, similar to what we have for a copyright like Creative Commons, that could differentiate between what is open from what is not? If recognition is really open, could a formal definition of Open Recognition make it... not so open anymore?

To explore further Open Recognition while setting aside those questions for later, we start with the question: how can we open recognition? For example, how could we open formal recognition? How could we create Open Diplomas?

Examples of opening formal recognition:

- Marie picks and mixes different modules from different disciplines and asks her university to recognise that their combination has the value of a master degree;
- John, who has 20 years experience in the industry goes to a university and asks to have his unique experience recognised as a master degree;
- Representatives of professional community with its own professional development curriculum and practice (peer review) negotiate with a university to have their curriculum endorsed and get credits towards academic degrees for the recognition they have obtained in the field.

These examples tick several of the boxes of Open Recognition: it is open to people and communities, they combine formal and non-formal recognition (academic credit and peer review), they are open to innovative practice, and probably to emergent knowledge too. In all instances, it is the individuals and the community that are at the initiative of the recognition process. They also recognise those who will recognise them.

The figure below proposes a representation of the space of recognition, defined by two axes:

- Formal / non-formal — institution / community centred;
- Traditional / non-traditional — past / future, static / dynamic.

![Figure 1: Open Recognition Plane—Source: Serge Ravet.](image)

To complete the figure, a number of “badges” have been added with names eliciting either the type or modality of recognition. For example, Smart Badges are recognition tokens which display can change over time, depending on how they are being “fed”, like a Tamagotchi.

The two axes split the space into four quadrants:
Open Recognition Framework

- **Conformance** — the focus is on the alignment to institutional [predefined] standards;

- **Inclusion** — the focus is on alignment to community norms;

- **Enabling** — the focus is on providing dynamic recognition instruments that, unlike traditional diplomas and certificates [and badges used as micro-credentials!] are not static, are oriented towards the future; and

- **Empowerment** — the focus is on providing individuals and communities the means to have a say in the design, implementation and running of open recognition ecosystems.

While the *conformance* quadrant might seem the least open and the *empowerment* one the most open, in reality all four quadrants can be opened, so an institution of formal education could develop *Open Recognition* practices and contribute to an *Open Recognition Ecosystem*. One example would be an institution working within its community, small or large, to *recognise* the actual learning that takes place within it, not just against a limited set of pre-defined standards or diplomas, as done in traditional approaches to Recognition of Prior Learning.

Conversely, communities could be tempted to mimic traditional institutions of formal education and implement recognition practices that are not open in order to get funding.

**Open Recognition Ecosystems**

Recognition does not happen in the void but in an ecosystem operating within and across three 3 levels:

- **Micro** (individual): recognition of and by *individuals*;

- **Meso** (organisational): recognition of and by *communities* formal and informal—networks, groups, organisations, businesses, local and regional authorities, etc.;

- **Macro** (societal): recognition of and by *law*—and the institutions enforcing the law at local, national and international levels—and by extension, market, culture and other societal/global systems.

The following table proposes a view of the different components of a recognition ecosystem.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recognition</th>
<th>Micro (Individual)</th>
<th>Meso (Organisational)</th>
<th>Macro (Societal)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source²</td>
<td>Love, friendship</td>
<td>Solidarity</td>
<td>Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact</td>
<td>Self-confidence</td>
<td>Self-respect</td>
<td>Self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entity</td>
<td>Relative, friend, neighbour, peer, colleague...</td>
<td>Enterprise, association, school, university, network...</td>
<td>Government, judicial system, market, culture, ecosystem...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

² C.f. Axel Honneth.
As recognition operates within and across three levels, we should explore recognition as flows and emerging properties rather than static states:

- An individual recognises a community she wants to join, conversely a community recognises a person who is worth becoming one of their members
- A community seeks a formal recognition by law as a “not-for-profit” or “of public interest” which then increases its chances to be recognised by the people and communities willing to support its mission
- ...

The table below elicits how each component of a recognition ecosystem interacts within and across levels where each level can be simultaneously the source (recognisant) and the target (recognised) of the recognition. For example, an individual can be in search of recognition by other individuals (I-I), organisations (O-I) or society (S-I) while recognising other individuals (I-I), organisations (I-O) or (the need to change the) law (I-S).

We can then elicit recognition flows:

- O1-I1...I1-I2...I1-O2...S-O2 could represent an organisation that has recognised an individual who consequently was recognised by another individual leading to the recognition by another organisation and the contribution of the individual to that organisation led to social recognition
- I1-In...O1...I1-O1, I2-O2, I3-O2, etc. could represent a group of people who have recognised the need to be recognised and organise themselves for mutual recognition that led further recognition by different organisations (get a job, join a training programme, join a cultural group, etc.).
Open Recognition Framework

In the figure above, each arrow indicates the recognition source and target where O and S stand for ‘Organisational’ and ‘Societal’ entities i.e. the entities populating the meso (organisational) and macro (system / state) levels. Individuals recognise and are being recognised, and their recognition of/by other levels influence their recognition at the micro level, that in turns influence the meso and macro levels.

The most novel approaches to recognition are likely to be found in the interaction within and across the micro and meso7 levels, i.e. associations and their ‘members’ (however formal membership is):

1 Within the micro level: individuals can recognise other individuals; being recognised by certain groups might increase the value of certain recognitions, e.g. if someone is a member of the Chartered Accountants community, her endorsement of an apprentice accountant will have more value than coming from someone not affiliated to any group.

2 Within the macro level: organisations can recognise other organisations; being recognised by 1 million people might increase the value of certain recognitions, e.g. to establish a partnership with another organisation.

It is with that in mind that we suggest the exploration of the potential of Open Recognition Circles, or ‘open recognition hubs’ (the final term to be chosen at a later stage).

Open Recognition and trust

Open recognition is not possible in an environment that is not fully based on trust. Trust is the foundation on which it is possible to enable Open recognition. Some events might lead to the loss of trust in certain agents, and therefore to their exclusion from the Recognition environment (open or not open), but the fact remains that, without trust, any recognition will be treated suspiciously and the costs to remove the suspicion would become rapidly prohibitive.

Trust is much more than the trust in documents or credentials, like a diploma or a certificate, it is about the trust in people and communities. What is the value of a “trusted” diploma 10 years after being issued if the person presenting it has not practiced what lead to the obtention of the diploma? As an employer or potential partner, what is looked for is the trust in the person, the trust in the person that she can do the job. And for that, the “trusted” diploma might be an indicator, but not a sufficient one to inform a judgement on whether or not hire or work with that person.

It is of diplomas as of the Michelin or Gault et Millau sign posts one finds at restaurants’ entrances: what is the value of a Michelin 2008 recommendation in 2018? In 10 years time, there could be another chef, better or worse, the refurbishing of the venue etc. If it is the only information available, a potential client could seek for a more recent

7 Organisations can also seek the recognition at macro level or influence to change the law in their favour.
source of review, e.g. Google or Trip Advisor. In the case of a 10 years old diploma, once could seek recommendations from LinkedIn or people you trust who also know that person.

This raises

TBD

Open Recognition Maturity

As elicited earlier, Open Recognition is not a state, but an emergent property of an ecosystem, also the development of an Open Recognition Ecosystem is likely to progress along a maturity continuum, as described below:

1. **Awareness**: there is an understanding of the need for and the benefits of Open Recognition but nothing concrete has yet happened;

2. **Exploring**: Open Recognition is explored through local and pilot initiatives at one or more levels (micro, meso or macro);

3. **Developing**: Key stakeholders across different levels (micro, meso and macro) are committed to supporting and implementing Open Recognition initiatives;

4. **Integrated**: Open Recognition is an integral part of the ecosystem across micro, meso and macro levels. Practices, technologies and policies are regularly reviewed and updated;

5. **Transformative**: Open Recognition practices, technologies and policies have a global impact on social transformation.

These different levels of maturity have been translated into a *Open Recognition Maturity Matrix*.

Opening Recognition

*In this section we are establishing possible paths to Open Recognition. More detailed guidelines will address the different stakeholders: individuals, communities, practitioners, organisations, etc.*

*Open Recognition* is not just a state nor a process, it is an emerging property of an ecosystem contributing to building the foundations for an open society. It is about empowering individuals and their communities to become active contributors in the recognition of others, rather than simply being "in search of recognition."

Opening recognition is not about defining what would be required to increase from 1% to 2% the number of people who have access to prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR), but asking challenging questions such as: *what should be done to have 100% of the talents, achievements and competencies of 100% of a country’s citizens to be recognised?* This requires more than adapting current processes or legislations, but a change in the mindset of a large number of stakeholders, starting with the people who are not recognised or mis-recognised.

Opening Recognition to individuals

Individuals have the power to recognise and are, by default, trustworthy

Open Recognition Circles, or *recognition hubs*, are groupings of people involved in the recognition of skills, capabilities, values, achievements of their members. They are to recognition what study circles are to discussing an issue:

“A study circle is a small group of people who meet multiple times to discuss an issue. Study circles may be formed to discuss anything from politics to religion to hobbies. They are differentiated from clubs by their focus on exploring an issue or topic rather than on activities or socializing.” Source: [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Study_circle)

The grouping can be temporary (e.g. during a hackathon) or permanent (e.g. an association for social integration or an enterprise), focused on a specific sector or cross-sector. The point is that *recognition happens anytime, anywhere,*
and the goal of the hubs is to make it visible. And what more relevant than exploiting the infrastructure of existing businesses, associations and institutions⁸? At the same time, individuals should have the possibility to create their own Open Recognition Circles to implement their own recognition schemes, independently of existing super- and infra-structures.

While some hubs would have a legitimacy of their own (think of IBM delivering hundreds of thousands of Open Badges), or through their affiliation (e.g. accredited business schools) or the qualities of some of their key members (who are recognised by other established communities), what legitimacy for a group of long term unemployed people, refugees or professionals in an emerging domain (e.g. data scientists) ? This could be achieved by having those hubs endorsed by other entities or hubs, therefore establishing a network of networks.

An Open Recognition Circle would therefore benefit from a double recognition: from the individuals, who will contribute to the recognition of their peers (micro level) and the organisations that recognise the hub as a legitimate space to produce recognition tokens, Open Badges or others. A specific recognition flow may or may not be dependent on the recognition from the macro level — e.g. the legal recognition as ‘not-for-profit association’ or ‘foundation of public interest’ etc. This may allow more flexible and context-specific recognitions, than would be possible at the more standardised / bureaucratic national level.

One key element of Open Recognition is to establish that everybody, irrespective of their social situation, can be active recognising agents and not just in need of recognition - see Box 1.

[start of box][Box 1 - The concept behind making people ‘recognisant agents’]

The need "to be recognised" starts with the need "to be recognised as capable of recognising." There is no such sequence as: Step 1: I am recognised; Step 2: now that I am recognised, I can recognise. How could I recognise that I am recognised if I don’t recognise the entity recognising me? Therefore, whatever the level of autonomy of a person, their own recognition implies their ability to recognise the recognisant agent, therefore one could say:

My recognition by others is preceded by my recognition of others of their ability to recognise me as capable of recognition.

Recognition is an emerging, organic and reciprocal process. This point is particularly important if we want to avoid any form of patronising. To understand that point, let us identify what would be a sensible and sensitive approach for an educator willing to make someone realise their ability to learn:

1. **Patronising**: give an easy problem to solve, if not solved find an easier one until…

2. **Empowering**: ask the person “teach me something” and in doing so, recognise the person as an equal—*I am a teacher and I want you to be my teacher too! If you can teach me something, that means that you have learned it. How did you learn it? etc.*

Contrary to the patronising approach where the educator maintains a strict statutory distance from the learner, the empowering approach leads to immediate recognition, does not entail the use of gimmicks nor the risk of subsequent failures. Among the additional sub-texts to the empowering approach are: “you can’t fail,” “I trust you,” “I want to know more about you.”

Educators like Claire Héber-Suffrin, a French educator, have known for a long time that one of the key problems in education is recognition: recognising a pupil as a potential teacher is a more powerful game changer than many didactical methods — that are mostly useless at addressing the issues created by an initial lack of recognition. Therefore, to transpose Claire Héber-Suffrin’s message into the space of recognition one could advise as an empowering approach to recognising people who suffer a lack of recognition: “recognise me,” make that person

⁸Such groupings, who might be open to this can be found in this list: [http://mirva.openrecognition.org/2018/01/23/open-recognition-as-transformative-social-innovation](http://mirva.openrecognition.org/2018/01/23/open-recognition-as-transformative-social-innovation)

⁹c.f.Claire Héber-Suffrin, *Apprendre par la réciprocité* (reciprocal learning)
understand that they have the ability to recognise and that their recognition is valuable. In telling “recognise me” the implicit message is “I recognise you as capable of recognition,” “I trust you” and “I recognise you unconditionally.”

While the recognition of skills and competencies are an important element, the recognition process should not be limited to those, or in other terms, it not limited to conditional recognition: I recognise you if you can do this or that. There is also room for unconditional recognition, i.e. precisely what happens when one utters: “teach me something” or “recognise me.”

The stakeholders that can contribute to making informal recognition visible and bridge the gap between traditional forms of recognition through establishing a network of ‘recognition hubs’ are:

- **Individuals**—establishing and contributing to recognition hubs;
- **Professionals**—as catalyst of recognition flows (educators, psychologists, social workers, etc.)
- **Associations and common-interest groupings** (from sports clubs to fab-labs)—as recognition hubs;
- **Local communities/authorities**—as recognition hubs such as learning cities, learning regions;
- **Employers**—as recognition hubs, sectoral and cross-sectoral;
- **Technology providers**—to provide the underpinning technologies making informal recognition seamless, visible and actionable;
- **Education and training providers, awarding bodies**—to recognise informal recognition as a path to formal learning and recognition;

In various constellations, these groups can work together to provide open recognition environments for their own interests through the processes of endorsement and recognition.

### Opening Recognition to Communities

Communities are places of producing and consuming recognition

Recognition is reciprocal—when I accept a recognition, I recognise you

### Opening to all forms of Recognition

**Informal recognition** has great value—it is not an inferior form of recognition

**Formal recognition** is not a superior form of recognition—it can be non-inclusive, using outdated standards and methods, etc.

### Opening to Places

Recognition as a starting point of a journey — not just ending points

Recognition as an exploration of a territory — not just predefined paths

### Opening to Innovation and transformation

Recognition of innovative practices

Recognition of emerging knowledge

Recognition of emerging jobs

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10 including vulnerable groups, such as people with low-qualification, long term unemployed, refugees, etc.
Decolonising Recognition

One systemic failure of current recognition systems is that it only flows down and individuals are typically denied the right to recognise. It starts at school where the only forms of recognition are gold stars, prizes, grades and diplomas (and recently, Open Badges!), all of which are issued by institutions or their representatives. The idea that a pupil has the capacity to recognise is alien to most formal educational systems. This systemic failure was reinforced by the first generation of the Open Badge Infrastructure where individuals were provided by Mozilla with a Backpack that could only store and display badges issued by institutions and “natural authorities” and did not give individuals the power to issue their own badges. Thanks to the new Open Badges specification, it should now be easy for individuals to issue their own tokens of recognition (‘endorsements’, in Open Badge parlance), creating thus the conditions to move from a world dominated by top-down recognition systems to one where bottom-up recognition flows are made possible, recognised and welcomed.

Formal, informal and non-formal learning

- **Formal learning** is always organised and structured, and has learning objectives. From the learner’s standpoint, it is always intentional: i.e. the learner’s explicit objective is to gain knowledge, skills and/or competences.
- **Informal learning** is not organised, has no set objectives in terms of learning outcomes and is not intentional from the learner’s standpoint. Often it is referred to as learning by experience or just as experience.
- **Non-formal learning** is generally organised and can have learning objectives. It may occur at the initiative of the individual but also happens as a by-product of more organised activities, whether or not the activities themselves have learning objectives. In some countries, the entire sector of adult learning falls under non-formal learning; in others, most adult learning is formal.

*source: OECD, Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning*

Therefore, while the MIRVA project was designed to address populations that do not have access to formal qualifications, the framework we are developing (with this document) should also be beneficial to those holding formal recognitions (as formal recognition does not exist without strong informal recognition).

By focusing on making visible informal recognition of informal learning we are applying some of the lessons learned from *design for all* or *universal design* which is about designing services, products and ecosystems equally accessible to people independently from their capabilities (physical or social)

**Ethics of Open Recognition**

*Charte de la Reconnaissance Ouverte* - Pour une éthique des Open Badges
*Open Recognition Charter* - For an Ethics of Open Badges

Ethics are what people use to distinguish right from wrong in the way they interact with the world. An ethics of Open Recognition is critical as we deal with human material and it is possible to use the instruments developed at the service of Open Recognition in a non ethical way. For example, Open Badges that were initially designed to make
Open Recognition Framework

visible informal learning, have been used to discriminate and exclude (c.f. Box “Open Badges are neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition to Open Recognition”).

The use of the qualification of openness can be misleading. For example, Open Educational Resources (OER), are primarily defined as a modality for accessing and licensing educational content. The definition does not say anything about the “openness” of the content itself. To have OER teaching creationism, neo-nazi or ISIS ideology, one only has to add a Copyleft or Creative Commons license to their mediocre and nauseating publications. Therefore, OER can be the vehicles to carry the ideologies of the enemies of an Open Society.

Similarly, Open Badges, that are recognition tokens are not innocuous. They can heal or kill, empower or control, enable or disable, recognise or exclude. While there are many examples of Open Badge practices that are aligned with the values of Open Recognition, there are others (c.f. link) where badges are used to divide, exclude and control.

In the perspective of Open Recognition, it is critical to define an ethical framework to which those in search of good practices or struggling against discriminating and excluding practices will be able to refer to.

One of the questions we need to address is: should every recognition lead to the generation of a recognition token, i.e. should a person get a badge for being open or trustworthy. What would happen to those people who are open and don’t want to ask or receive this kind of endorsement? Aren’t we taking the risk of moving into a world where every one of our character traits should be made explicit by default, a world where we will assume that a person is not open or trustworthy because they do not have the “I am open” or “I am trustworthy” badge? Is there anything more suspicious than someone who would state “you can trust me” or “I am the least racist person you have ever interviewed” — even if this statement is being endorsed by many?

How to provide a positive (or negative) answer to the question “can I trust that person” without having to check whether that person has a “Trust Badge Level 3” — which should not be mistaken with “Badge Security Clearance Level 3” as trust and security are not the same thing and are inversely correlated (c.f. Open Badges: the deleterious effects of mistaking security for trust)

Related questions are:

- Should we always try to formalise the informal, make explicit the implicit?
- Should we define a set of criteria, behavioural indicators to assess the implicit in order to make it explicit?
- Are there alternatives to standardisation?
- Do we have to formalise (in the sense of linking to a formal framework) to make the informal visible? What other indicators can we use to make inferences?
- What are the associated risks with (over-/lack of) formalisation?
- The relationship between the recognition process and the tokens of recognition and how to avoid the risk of the token taking over the process and its ‘natural’ outcome?

We should also address the consequences of the lack of recognition and the risks for the people being denied recognition, from benign to life threatening conditions — from Rwanda to the Balkans, questions of ‘identity’ have fuelled campaigns for ethnic cleansing and even genocide (Nancy Frazer)

≡ TBD
How to implement open recognition

These guidelines would make references to activities and insights gained in the previous steps. They would include responses to questions such as:

- What stages of development and implementation are necessary?
- Which party has which responsibility in an open recognition procedure?
- How to assure that an open recognition procedure is transparent and fair?
- How to encourage recognition in different settings?
- What technical assistance is typically necessary to assure useful, transparent and well-documented badges?
- (...)

Open Recognition Competency Framework

In this section we are defining the skills, knowledge, attitudes and values contributing to opening recognition.

CORE VALUES & ATTITUDES

Core values

The following list indicates the core values that every person working in or with an adult education Provider needs to have:

- Promote democratic and humanistic values.
- Promote inclusiveness.
- Promote access for all
- Recognise the value of diversity (people, culture, experience, etc.).
- Honesty
- Trusting others

Core attitudes

The following list indicates the core attitudes that every person working in or with an Adult Education Provider needs to have:

- Person centred
- Respectful
- Empathic
- Emotionally controlled
- Open-minded
- Non-judgmental
- Positive attitude
- Reflective
- Confident
- Resilient
- Reliable
- Committed
- Flexible
- Accountable, for oneself and others
- Tolerant
**CORE KNOWLEDGE**

*To perform competently, you need to know, understand and be able to apply:*

**Organisational context**
- the organisation’s recognition policies
- the organisation’s policy regarding accessibility to learning opportunities and resources
- the organisation’s policy regarding the confidentiality of data about learners: what information may be made available to whom

**Legal requirements**
- relevant data protection legislation: and how to ensure this is rigorously applied
- relevant legislation with regard to individual rights and equality of opportunity
- legal requirements concerning making recognition opportunities accessible to all.
- data protection requirements concerning recording information on those with special needs

**Monitoring and evaluation**
- the importance of maintaining complete, accurate and up-to-date records and how to do so
- the range of ways in which Digital Technologies may be used for monitoring, evaluation and recognition
- how to analyse information to identify trends and common and emerging problems
- the importance of involving users in evaluating the quality of the support they receive, and how to do so

**Continual improvement**
- how to use information and experience to improve systems and personal performance

**Learning and development**
- how formal and informal learning operates
- how formal and informal recognition operates
- how to make individuals the owners of the recognition process
- how to make a recognition accessible to people with different abilities
- how to provide alternatives when critical resources are not accessible to learners with special needs
- how to involve potential learners in ensuring that recognition opportunities are accessible – particularly those with special needs

**Digital technologies**
- the range of ways hardware, software and systems may be used to facilitate the recognition (e.g. Open Badges)
- how to match technological provision to recognition needs

**Providing support**
- who is or are the best people/community to provide the support to recognition
- how to provide support to people with special needs

**Communication**
- how to make known to all the recognition opportunities available
- how to communicate the importance of extending recognition opportunities to those with special needs

**Planning**
- the principles and processes of planning and scheduling work

**KNOWLEDGE ON RECOGNITION**

*To perform competently, you need to know, understand and be able to apply:*

**Accessibility**
the importance of providing access to recognition for all, regardless of physical or intellectual disabilities or environmental disadvantages
how to access information on current legislation, recommendations and guidelines on recognition, e.g. legal framework for Validation deS Aquis de l’Expérience (France)
how to access best practice in open recognition
how to apply legislation on recognition
how to apply recommendations and guidelines on recognition
how to commit to providing recognition services
how to contribute to an open recognition ecosystem
how to work with candidates to recognition
how to use technology to support recognition, e.g. open badges, ePortfolios, etc.

**Knowledge on Partnership**

To perform competently, you need to know, understand and be able to apply:

**Partnerships**
- types of partnerships:
  - internal partnerships and networks
  - external networks
  - local community
  - service providers, vendors
  - staff responsible for establishing partnerships:
    - staff groups
    - task/project groups
    - members of targets groups
    - cross-functional groups

**Working with others/networking**
- how to use networks to find suitable partners

**Monitoring and evaluation**
- how to monitor and evaluate the progress and results of partnerships

**Organisational context**
- the organisation’s policy and practices regarding partnerships

**Communication**
- how to communicate the value of partnerships to stakeholders

TBD and further specified for the case of open recognition (Example of a competency framework: [Google Doc](https://docs.google.com/document), [pdf](#))
## Open Recognition Maturity Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Aware</th>
<th>Exploring</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Integrated</th>
<th>Transformative</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adoption</strong></td>
<td>The need to adopt Open Recognition is identified.</td>
<td>Open Recognition is explored through local and pilot initiatives.</td>
<td>Open Recognition is identified as a key element for development.</td>
<td>Open Recognition is an integral part of the organisation’s strategy.</td>
<td>Open Recognition practices, technologies and policies have a global impact on social transformation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ecosystem</strong></td>
<td>The need to participate in and contribute to an Open Recognition ecosystem is identified.</td>
<td>Open Recognition is explored through local and pilot initiatives at one or more levels (micro, meso or macro)</td>
<td>Key stakeholders across different levels (micro, meso and macro) are committed to supporting and implementing Open Recognition initiatives</td>
<td>Open Recognition is an integral part of the ecosystem across micro, meso and macro levels. Practices, technologies and policies are regularly reviewed and updated</td>
<td>Open Recognition practices, technologies and policies have a global impact on social transformation.</td>
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<td><strong>Leadership</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Policy</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Strategy</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Impact</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Sustainability</strong></td>
<td>The need for securing resources to support Open Recognition initiatives has been identified.</td>
<td>Open Recognition practice is supported on an ad hoc basis, e.g. via project funding or individual initiatives.</td>
<td>Some areas of the organisation regularly earmark resources to support Open Recognition practices.</td>
<td>The institution’s budget regularly assumes and includes a commitment to Open Recognition practice and its development.</td>
<td>There is no need to earmark Open Recognition budget as they are fully blended within institutional infrastructure and practice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Open Recognition Framework

TBD (c.f. a model of maturity matrices— accessibility and ePortfolio)

Referenced literature


Ravet, S. (2015). For an Open Badge Framework (Green Paper). draft retrieved from https://docs.google.com/document/d/1f51AUgLA_ggl2CE6V5Zlm1BS8ckRflXW3CC0j9jHWq/edit


● Towards an Ethical Framework for Open Recognition
● Open Recognition and its Enemies (1) — The genesis of Open Badges
● Open Recognition and its Enemies (2) — No Informal Learning without Informal Recognition
● Open Recognition and its Enemies (3) — Informal recognition in the Walhalla of Badges
● Open Recognition and its Enemies (4) — Quality Assurance
● Open Recognition and its Enemies (5) — Saved by Open Endorsement!
● Beyond Open Badges: #OpenSignatures — the power to act, rather than the power to pack!
● OpenBadges: the Milestones of a re-Decentralised Web
● The Open Badges Backpack: an obstacle to innovation?
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- From #blockchain to #BadgeChain – Introduction
- From #blockchain to #BadgeChain (2) – the chained badge
- From #blockchain to #BadgeChain (3) — the trustworthy chain
- OpenBadges: the BOTOX of education? — #BeyondCredentials
- OpenBadges: formal vs. informal recognition — #BeyondCredentials part 2
- The Advent of the Personal Ledger — #ePortfolios and #OpenBadges Unite!
- Rebuilding Trust, the Currency of an Open Economy and Society — #OpenBadges, #badgechain
- Valuing human capital and social capital doesn’t need “pretty pictures”
- Open Badges + #Blockchains = #BitofTrust ?
- Open Badges ‘of’ civic engagement vs. ‘for’ civic engagement
- Open Badges: “micro-credentials” vs. “progressive-credentials”
- What relationship between #OpenBadges and competencies?
- Open Badges for Holographic Identities
- For an Open Badge Conceptual Framework (green paper)