



# Trend 1: Identity

## THE PROBLEM

Job seekers often face numerous discouraging challenges in their paths towards new employment. These include taking many similar and time-consuming tests covering the same essential information. Conversely, employers spend a significant amount of resources on developing such tests to help ensure the skilled candidates they select meet their needs. In addition, tests or systems of recognition have historically tended to favour formal degrees and diplomas at the expense of soft skills or skills acquired through non-academic settings.

## AN INNOVATIVE SOLUTION

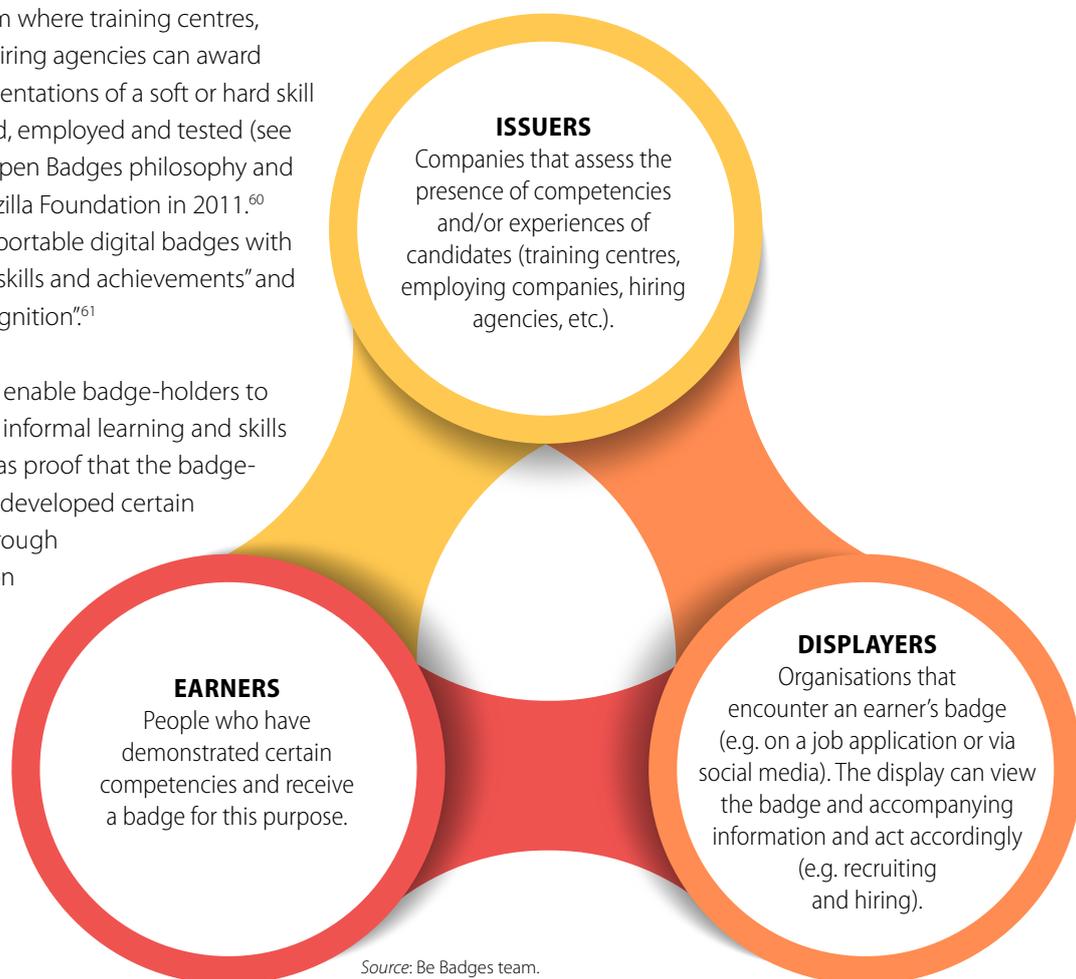
Be Badges is a digital platform where training centres, employing companies and hiring agencies can award digital badges – visual representations of a soft or hard skill – to people they have trained, employed and tested (see Figure 16). It is built on the Open Badges philosophy and standard initiated by the Mozilla Foundation in 2011.<sup>60</sup> Open Badges are “verifiable, portable digital badges with embedded metadata about skills and achievements” and serve as a form of “open recognition”.<sup>61</sup>

The aim of the platform is to enable badge-holders to obtain formal recognition of informal learning and skills obtained. The badges serve as proof that the badge-holder has demonstrated or developed certain skills. They can be earned through processes such as completion of a training programme or passing a test. They can also be awarded for the successful completion of projects, which may be ignored by typical credentials and forms of certification.<sup>62</sup>

Only organisations verified by the Be Badges team may issue Be Badges.<sup>63</sup> Badge-issuing organisations provide a thorough description of the skills involved in the awarding of a badge. Each badge contains digital information that confirms the value of this

recognition, the skills the individual demonstrated, how they were tested and the criteria met. This information empowers badge-holders to promote their verified skills on the job market, including through online resumes, websites and social media accounts such as LinkedIn. Employers can also access the Be Badges platform to identify potential candidates with the skills profile they need. Be Badges enable users to obtain recognition for their skills, as well as the job they deserve.<sup>64</sup> The platform also enables badge-holders to monitor the number of times a badge has been viewed.<sup>65</sup>

Figure 16: Three parties involved in Be Badges



Source: Be Badges team.

Selor has extensive experience in evaluating job candidates, as it screens up to 100 000 public service candidates per year. Only 2-3% of these candidates get a job; however, there are many others who were screened positively but were not selected. Selor wanted to enable these candidates to bring their positive screening

60. See <https://openbadges.org>.

61. See <https://openbadges.org/get-started>.

62. See <https://youtu.be/jlYUuwWy3v4>.

63. See [www.bebadges.be/how-does-it-work](http://www.bebadges.be/how-does-it-work).

64. See <https://youtu.be/jlYUuwWy3v4>.

65. See [www.bebadges.be/how-does-it-work](http://www.bebadges.be/how-does-it-work).



**Figure 17: Summer of Code Meetup** Source: Be Badges team.

results to other employers so they would not have to be tested again for the presence of identical or similar competencies. With Be Badges, Selor wants to look further than only formal degrees and education and, by doing so, find a new answer to challenges of talent and job mobility, waste of talent, employability, and talent mismatch.

Since its inception, Be Badges has been an ongoing open source community effort. Open meetups are organised to engage with all interested parties from both public and private organisations, as well as individual users. Participants collaborate through an open meetup group<sup>66</sup> and an open Slack channel.<sup>67</sup> Participants and users are considered to be codevelopers and partners helping to spread open badges.

Over 3 000 organisations around the world are now using Open Badges (the open standard upon which Be Badges are built) to build talent and recognise achievement. The system is constructed around an open standard that enables Open Badges to be interoperable and shared across the Internet. Badge-holders can combine badges from numerous badge issuers to provide a complete picture of their experience and achievements.<sup>68</sup> Selor actively supports the Open Badges community in spreading this standard, not only as outcomes of learning experiences, but also as an entry point to labour markets and the building blocks of a digital curriculum vitae (CV) or resume. As part of this

community, Selor works with, learns from and helps to inform different organisations working on Open Badges worldwide, sharing knowledge and expertise in the spirit of open innovation and the open source philosophy. Because Open Badges represent an interoperable open standard, badge recipients can collect other types of badges not provided by Be Badges in “digital backpacks” to further illustrate other elements of their identity.

Selor is already scaling the idea beyond the Belgian labour market. In 2017, Selor co-initiated, together with the Belgian Digital Transformation Office,<sup>69</sup> Jobpunt Vlaanderen<sup>70</sup> and Cognizone,<sup>71</sup> an Open Knowledge Summer of Code<sup>72</sup> project to build a tool linking Open Badges to the newly launched European Skills/Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO) multilingual taxonomy of the European Commission (see Figure 17).<sup>73</sup> The resulting product, ESCO Badges, is now available online as an open-source beta platform.<sup>74</sup> By linking badges to the new ESCO taxonomy, ESCO Badges make it easier for displayers to correctly assess the exact skill represented by the badge via the principle of linked open data.<sup>75</sup>

66. See [www.meetup.com/Belgian-Open-Badges-Meetup](http://www.meetup.com/Belgian-Open-Badges-Meetup).

67. See <http://bebadges.herokuapp.com>. Slack (slack.com) is a digital collaborative workspace. A Slack channel is a conversation space where discussions can be organised around any topic.

68. See <https://openbadges.org/get-started>.

69. See <https://bosa.belgium.be/en/dg-digital-transformation>.

70. See [www.jobpunt.be](http://www.jobpunt.be).

71. See [www.cogni.zone](http://www.cogni.zone).

72. See <http://2017.summerofcode.be>.

73. See <https://ec.europa.eu/esco/portal/home>. Part of the Europe 2020 Strategy, ESCO identifies and categorises skills, competences, qualifications and occupations relevant for the EU labour market and education and training. It facilitates dialogue between the labour market and the education/training sector by providing a common language that could help overcome labour market imbalances and increase occupational and geographical mobility in the European Union.

74. See <http://escobadges.eu>.

75. See Figure 18 for a photo of the Be Badges and ESCO Badges team presenting their work at a conference.

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## NOVELTY

Be Badges represent a unique form of innovation worldwide, both in terms of government usage of Open Badges and the application of Open Badges in the labour market, according to Selor.

## RESULTS AND IMPACT

Even though Be Badges, and the associated ESCO Badges, programmes are fairly new, they have already ushered in significant progress in Belgium. The City of Ghent, Belgium's second-largest municipality, conducted a pilot, together with Jobpunt Vlaanderen, allowing some candidates with sufficient Be Badge qualifications to bypass the initial selection phase and pass directly to a second stage of hiring. Be Badges have also been incorporated into pilots at Belgian educational institutions and universities, such as Odisee, one of the largest educational institutions in Flanders, Belgium.<sup>76</sup>

Over time, Be Badges and ESCO Badges could have the ability to promote "open recognition". This allows individuals to be recognised for all aspects of their identity, not just those listed on a certificate. This has the potential to unlock new types of motivations in individuals, and to build a more diverse and inclusive job market.

## USER PERSPECTIVE

At present, little information from the users' point of view is available. Programme leadership has indicated that implementation and use of the programme is relatively

recent and that a more significant focus on user perspectives is underway as the team iterates the original products.

## CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Within government, it proved somewhat challenging to get people to accept the notion of undertaking the work involved in a transparent, open manner, for example, through open meetup groups and on open online platforms. Some people believed that time spent on open channels was not the core business of government. However, this initial reluctance fell away as it became evident that working in the open enhanced the product and service in ways that would have been impossible in a closed system.

Another challenge consisted of explaining the standards and benefits of open badges to a non-technical audience. However, production of a short video<sup>77</sup> that walks interested individuals through the product and benefits proved a highly effective means of convincing people of the merits of the programme and familiarising them with the underlying concepts.

A lingering challenge that Be Badges and ESCO Badges teams face is building acceptance of badges in the job market. This challenge will require constant work and must be addressed through continuous and clear communication on the benefit of the programme, highlighting success stories over time from the perspectives of issuers and badge-holders.

76. See [www.bebadges.be/single-post/2017/01/25/What-if-LinkedIn-endorsements-would-have-real-value](http://www.bebadges.be/single-post/2017/01/25/What-if-LinkedIn-endorsements-would-have-real-value).

77. See <https://youtu.be/jlYUuwvy3v4>.

**Figure 18: Conference presentation of Be Badges and ESCO Badges** Source: Be Badges team.

