

## Open Badge Network O1A6 Business Plan

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## 1. Executive Summary

The Open Badge Network (OBN) is a 3-year-long Erasmus + project (running Sept 2015 – Aug 2017) which brings together organisations from across Europe to support the development of an Open Badge ecosystem, promoting the use of Open Badges to recognise non-formal and informal learning.

During the lifetime of the OBN project the Network is maintained and promoted by the project partners and funded from the support received from the European Commission. As in the case of all projects the sustainability of the developments beyond the lifetime of the project is an issue that has to be cared for. It is the aim of the project consortium to keep up the Network following Aug 2017 and prepare for its self-sustainability.

The present document, the OBN Business Plan aims to lay down the foundations of the OBN network self-sustainability thus presents the analysis of resources and activities which ensure the continuation of the work started in the framework of the project, and sets the agenda for the maintenance of the activities which fit into the general operations of the partners, as well as list the activities which are to be continued dependent upon the availability of further funding.

## 2. Background: The Open Badge Network project

The Open Badge Network (OBN) is a 3-year-long Erasmus + project (running Sept 2015 – Aug 2017) which brings together organisations from across Europe to support the development of an Open Badge ecosystem, promoting the use of Open Badges to recognise non-formal and informal learning.

Mozilla Open Badges is an open standard that allows all skills and achievements to be recognised and shared across the web. Schools, universities, employers and informal learning providers globally are using open badges to capture lifelong learning which is currently unrecognised.

***The OBN project aims to provide a trusted source of independent information, tools and informed practice to support people who are interested in creating, issuing and earning badges across Europe.***

Within the framework of the OBN project the OBN Community has been established for those who are interested in the topic of Open Badges. The OBN Community invites organisations and individuals from across Europe to join and help building the Open Badge Network. Badge novices or experts are equally invited in this community to become an Associated Partner of the project consortium and/or to join the OBN Steering Committee, the Board responsible for sustaining the results of the Open badge Network project.

Details about OBN and registration possibility can be found on <http://www.openbadgenetwork.com/>



## 2. Aim of the OBN Business Plan

During the lifetime of the OBN project the Network is maintained and promoted by the project partners and funded from the support received from the European Commission. As in the case of all projects the sustainability of the developments beyond the lifetime of the project is an issue that has to be cared for. It is the aim of the project consortium to keep up the Network following Aug 2017 and prepare for its self-sustainability.

The present document, the OBN Business Plan aims to lay down the foundations of the OBN network self-sustainability. The Business Plan:

- Provides an overview of the project outputs that can be interesting for the public after the end of the project;
- Examines the present and potential functions of the Open Badges Network
- Looks at the resources necessary to sustain the development of the Open Badge Network
- Makes an inventory of alternative sources and solutions which may contribute to the provision of resources
- Drafts an Action Plan for sustainability including the tasks allocation and timeline for the partnership in order to found the future operation during the the remaining 1-year-long time of the project period
- Sets the ground for the formation and the operation of the OBN Steering Committee, the Board which will be dedicated to take further the results of the OBN project beyond August 2017.

## 3. The Sustainability of the Open Badge Network Project

### 3.1 Present function of the Open Badge Network

As described in the [OBN Charter](#) the Open Badge Network is a trusted source of independent information, tools and informed practice to support people who are interested in creating, issuing and earning badges across Europe.

Within the framework of the project the Consortium aims to contribute to the promotion of Open Badges by:

- Carrying out research in the field
- Initiating research and publishing research papers on Open Badges
- Compiling guidelines for the implementation of Open Badges
- Offering learning opportunities in the form of a free Massive Open Online Course (MOOC)



- Maintaining the OBN Community of interest by sharing information and resources
- Shaping the future of the Open Badge movement via top-down and bottom-up activities, ie.: collecting and disseminating information from practitioners to policy makers and vice versa.

### 3.2 OBN envisioned beyond the project lifetime

The Open Badge Network is envisioned by the project consortium to

- Be coordinated by its Steering Committee, consisting of present project members and other organizations interested in the open badge topic;
- Establish the OBN Secretariat hosted by one of the members of the SC,
- Remain an active community of interest staying up-to-date and sharing information in the field of Open Badges,
- Staying a growing resource base offering information on the newest trends and developments regarding Open Badges even beyond the lifetime of the project,
- Initiating projects and stimulating discussions on Open Badges at education, employment and policy levels
- Organizing networking events both virtual and face-to-face, ie.: webinars, workshops, conferences (one f2f event per a year)

The main outputs of the project are available on the [project](#) portal (such as the Charter, Inventory of Open Badge Initiatives, Use Cases, Discussion paper on Open Badges for Individuals, Discussion paper on Open Badges for Organisations, Guidelines for the implementation of Open Badges for individuals and organisations, Guidelines for Badges in Territories, White Paper on Open Badges Policies and the MOOC on Open Badges) contain useful information for various stakeholders and a point of reference even after the end of the project.

Keeping research results up-to-date and widen the resource base offered via the OBN portal is part of the business plan. Thus the business plan addresses the issue of sustainability of the project results and including plans for how the Open Badge Network can be maintained and widened. It is foreseen that the OBN Community offers a forum for Open Badges enthusiasts in Europe to meet, share, discuss and initiate new collaborations in the field.

## 4. Business model canvas for sustainability

To analyse the sustainability potential for the Open Badge Network, the partnership selected to use the 'business model canvas'<sup>1</sup> taking into account the potential activities and values to be sustained and enumerating the partners, resources channels, revenues and cost which can be linked to these. The structure of the business model canvas is the following:

- (1) Key activities
- (2) Key partners
- (3) Key resources
- (4) Value Proposition
- (5) Channels
- (6) Customer segments
- (7) Cost Structure
- (8) Revenue streams

At the partners' meeting in Groningen (24-25 April 2017) the project members within a small group activity attempted to list the content to the headings above. The group work results were collected in the tables below and are summarized and synthesized in the Sections 4.1 - 4.8.

[Business model canvas table Group No1](#)

[Business model canvas table Group No2](#)

[Business model canvas table Group No3](#)

In Annex 1 you can see the synthesized business model canvas for the Open Badge Network project.

### 4.1 Key activities

The following activities were listed by the partner which can be continued beyond the lifetime of the project as being part of their regular business:

- *Dissemination:*
  - OBN portal maintenance: registration option --- Keeping up the OBN Community of members
  - Events: f2f + online --- giving space to the topic of badges at conferences, workshops, webinars
  - Newsletter --- distribute news via organisations' regular Newsletters
- *Ongoing sharing of expertise:*
  - Promotion and updating portal repository: guidelines, tools, best practices / case studies
  - Offering consultancy, and peer support
  - Establishing thematic groups for discussion (HE, policy)
  - FAQs
- *Issuing badges*

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<sup>1</sup> Business model canvas for Facebook:

<https://businessmodelinnovationmatters.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/facebook-business-model2.png>



- *MOOC training relaunch*
  - Webinars: share case studies - one webinar / partner / year
- *Pursue of networks, projects & funding opportunities*

## 4.2 Key partners

Key partners can be grouped as internal - external; some can also be classified as suppliers or customers

	internal	external
Customers / users	EDEN Beuth CamPof Artes Supsi iTEE DUO	Universities Informal and non-formal training providers Human resource departments of companies, organizations
suppliers	DigitalMe	Discendum Cineca BadgeCraft Association of Learning Technologies IMS Global

### 4.2.1 OBN Steering Committee - OBN Council

OBN Steering Committee / OBN Council is planned to be the official successor of the presently existing OBN Community. The partnership has taken decision that the partners member of the OBN Erasmus Plus project constitute as the OBN founders members/OBN Council and be committed to enlarge participation promoting membership of Associate partners (registered members of the OBN portal). It is envisioned to include organizations that are interested in sustaining the OBN project developments to devote time and dedication - as part of their regular business - to keep up the activities listed in Section 4.1. Joining the OBN SCoffers the following:

- being informed about the newest issues in the field
- to be able to influence the evolution of OBs – be among the once influencing the policies and promoting trends



- benefit from having information, quicker solutions and accessibility to funds than just working on their own
- be a certified partner to provide consultancy service to customers (paying in a later phase)

Potential members of the OBN SC:

Steering Committee members come from the OBN partnership (3 project partners) and 2-15 partners from Associate partners (registered members of the OBN portal). These are organizations already providing and aiming to issue badges, software providers, government bodies, national agencies of lifelong learning, quality assurance bodies, examination boards etc.

Secretariat:

The operations of the OBN Steering Committee is planned to be facilitated by a Secretariat. In lack of funding for these the Secretariat can be part of some existing organization.

### [Invitation to join the OBN Steering Committee](#)

## 4.3 Key resources

Required Resources	Available resources
<p>Commitment</p> <p>Time for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Initiative</li> <li>● Partner-network</li> <li>● Secretariat</li> <li>● Dissemination activities: writing news, social media posts</li> </ul> <p>OBN Portal: fora for Community activities, peer support; knowledge sharing</p> <p>MOOC and webinar infrastructure and content</p> <p>Money for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Organizing f2f events</li> <li>● Facilities</li> </ul>	<p>Commitment :-)</p> <p>Time integrated in the daily business of the partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Looking for funding opportunities, peer projects, networks</li> <li>● Shared role of Secretariat</li> <li>● Dissemination activities</li> </ul> <p>OBN Portal with Forum and already available content (Guidelines, tools) - maintained by EDEN</p> <p>MOOC and webinar infrastructure - LearnPress, Adobe Connect</p> <p>MOOC and webinar content - partners can contribute with one webinar per year</p> <p>Money as part of regular business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Organizing f2f events within otherwise organizes conferences, workshops</li> <li>● Facilities ensured as part of regular events</li> </ul>



#### 4.4 Value Proposition

The OBN project results value proposition can be differentiated by the following target groups: blissfully ignorant, novices, experts, *super* experts

Blissfully ignorant	Raising awareness Why badges?
Novices	Get started: basic information tools/ guidance Predefined Badges Case studies Find/ build partners/ make connections "Qualify the unqualified" Recognizing of achievement
Experts	Exchange of experience Good practises from other countries Trusted source of information European contact point Find/ build partners/ make connections Recognizing of achievement
Super experts	*be part of the club* Policy formations Influence Lobbying for new features Similar interest Latest developments Quality standards assessment European contact point



## 4.5 Channels

The following channels were identified by the partnership for communicating the value of OBN and for providing space for the realization of activities listed under 4.1.

- Face-to-face and virtual events: webinars, conferences, workshops
- EDEN network
- Business (by partner) network, eg.: IMS network; IMS Newsletter
- Social media (OBN Twitter; LinkedIn Group)
- OBN Portal
  - Forum
  - MOOC
  - Blog
  - Comments
- YouTube

## 4.6 Customer segments

Customers can be grouped as individuals and organizations:

### organizations:

Public: Local/ national governments

Business: Companies - Employers;

Companies - Badge issuers (training providers)

Non-Governmental Organizations:

- Employers;
- training providers (HE, VET, non-formal, informal);
- Guidance professionals;
- refugee organizations

### Individuals:

Badge earners: learners

Policy makers

## 4.7 Cost Structure

The following activities demand the investment of funds or human resources:

- Portal hosting + management
- Events organization (administration, venue, follow up)
- Time to deliver MOOC
- Ongoing governance of the Network



## 4.8 Revenue streams

In order to sustain the OBN project results in the long run and to carry out the activities listed under 4.1 the partnership enumerated the possible sources of revenues.

A modest membership fee to access:

- repository
- MOOC

Participate at:

- Events

Selling OBN services:

- Consulting fee; Eg
  - Offering premium services to help organizations in creating their own badges. (Eg.: badges for students taking part in exchange projects, Erasmus+ mobility projects etc). This could be done by making available free 'static' information, i.e. relevant PPTs and recordings of basic OBN webinars (this should allow targeted stakeholders to catch a glimpse of the usefulness and in-service application of the OBN services and know-how), complemented by tailored individual support that OBN experts would charge for (e.g. personalise a webinar or workshop to the precise needs of the customer).
- Advertising fee

## 5. Models for sustainability - based on the OBN Green Paper

Parallel to applying the elements of the Business Model Canvas for the OBN project, the Green paper listed the possible models for sustainability, namely:

Sponsorship/Volunteering;

Membership;

Marketplace and

Advocacy models.

The partnership assessed these models and in common agreement it was suggested that a combination of the Sponsorship/Volunteering and Advocacy models can be applied to sustain the results of the OBN project.

The following sections briefly describe the models (more details can be found in the [Green paper](#)) and suggest actions to be taken by partners in the future under these specific models.



## 5.1 Sponsorship/Volunteering

### Description:

Open Badge Network is a not-for-profit network, therefore maintaining its activities depends on obtaining sponsorship of one or more of its partners or members.

### Proposed actions by the partners:

All partners take on the project results within their regular activities. Eg: EDEN integrates the topic in the EDEN conferences; continues to issue badges for participation at its events, etc.

## 5.2 Advocacy model

### Description:

Provide free access to tools and funded partners/council continue to voice the views of the European community globally by merging with the global badge network. This work would be likely be funded through a grant.

### Proposed actions by the partners:

Partners look for funding opportunities for the future and keep up cooperation in terms of building up future projects.

## 6. Action Plan

### 6.1 Activities to be carried out regardless of obtaining new funding

What (activity)	Why and for whom?	Who? (partner)	When?
Issuing open badges linked to <a href="#">all events</a> (f2f and virtual) organized	For various target groups from E&T sector; To increase the recognition of open badges	EDEN BEUTH ITeE DigitalMe	ongoing
Pursue funding opportunities, spot opportunities, assemble partnership, draft proposal, do project	For interested partners from the partnership (maybe beyond)	EDEN, CamProf Beuth, ITeE, SUPSI-DEASS, ARTES	ongoing
Establish OBN Council and organize audio meeting on a 2-monthly bases	OBN Council To sustain and update about activities	All partners with rotating moderation	Every 2-month
Working groups and focus groups	Experts and clients to recognise their involvements in consultation	CamProf	Ongoing
Developing a local network	Adjusting and defining requirements to the context, involving different stakeholders like HE, associations, NGOs, SMEs, policy makers, local government and public bodies	Beuth, ITeE	ongoing
Usability of the badge in the local context, promoting it within university	Various targets where the institution can act as promoter and issuer	SUPSI-DEASS	Ongoing

Promoting Open Badges in Higher Education	Enhancing awareness and promoting good practice in HE	Beuth Digitalme	ongoing
Keeping the portal up to date and writing blogs	All steering group members	EDEN - with contribution from all partners	ongoing
Technical development of the competency repository and the semantic description of competencies	Further development of the prototype, extension of standards like the ESCO standard (in the future to include learning outcomes)	Beuth,	Ongoing
Include OB initiative in relevant projects and reports	Raising awareness about OB and potentially increase membership in the network	CamProf	ongoing
Conferences and papers	Promoting knowledge about OB on conferences and other dissemination opportunities	Beuth, CamProf, EDEN, Digitalme	ongoing
Use of competences for badges and repository	To better align OB initiative to other existing EU frameworks	CamProf	ongoing

## 6.2 Activities dependent on future funding

What (activity)	Why and for whom?	Who? (partner)	When?
Steering Committee coordination - OBN Secretariat	Associated partners	To be decided if funding available	Ongoing - dependent on future funding
Liaising with other badge networks	Appointed "liaison officer"	To be decided if funding available	Ongoing - dependent on future funding
Writing a newsletter	Secretariat (or one of the other steering committee members)	Secretariat to be appointed	Ongoing

## Annex 1

### Business\_model\_canvas\_synthesis

Key partners	Key activities	Value propositions	Customer relationships	Customer segments
Research organisations All current partners! Association of Learning Technologies IMS Global → enlarging scope beyond Europe IMS - European hub Badge alliance Europe Universities (by territory) Eden Beuth DME CamPof Artes Supsi iTEE DUO DigitalMe Discendum Cineca BadgeCraft	New case studies “flagship” Ongoing sharing of best practice and experiences Repository/ standard group  MOOC Network Expertise of partners Portal repository Guidelines + tools News letter Website Thematic groups (Policy, HE) Online events MOOC training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Webinars</li> <li>o Consultancy</li> </ul> FAQs Peer support Dissem. Publ. (EDEN) Issuing badges Pursue of projects & funding	Raising awareness Why badges? Get started, Basic Information tools/ guidance Exchange of experience *be part of the club* Policy Influence Lobbying Trusted source of information European contact point - localised Find/ build partners/ make connections Similar interest Guidelines Predefined Badges Case studies Good practises from other countries Network Latest developments	newsletter/ outgoing communication Social media  Ex + networks e.g. membership bodies Endorsement from flagship organizations Partnership (vs competitor) Consulting Contact point Lobbyist Organizations issuing badges / recognizing learning	Local/ national government Big companies Badge issues (any org) Badge earners Organisations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Public</li> <li>o Business</li> <li>o NGO</li> <li>o Volunteering</li> </ul> Specific: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o VET &amp; HE</li> <li>o Guidance profs</li> <li>o Employers</li> <li>o Refugee orgs</li> </ul> Policy makers Individuals

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	<p><b>Key resources</b>                  case studies / info of key initiatives/ orgs                  Time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Commitment</li> <li>· Initiative</li> <li>· Partner-network</li> <li>· Money (limited)</li> <li>· Facilities</li> <li>· Secretariat</li> <li>· Social Media activ.</li> </ul> <p>Webinar platform                  LearnPress                  Champion disciplines                  Events (virtual &amp; f2f)                  Fora for peer support</p>	<p>Lobbying for new features                  Newcomers to OBs                  Early adopters                  Facilitating improvement                  “Qualify the unqualified”                  → labor market, employers                  “Blissfully ignorant”                  Council of OBN                  → successor of partnership                  Recognizing of achievement                  Quality standards                  assessment</p>	<p><b>Channels</b>                  Events/ dissemination                  webinars                  IMS network                  EDEN network                  Business (by partner) network                  Social media (OBN)                  Portal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Forum</li> <li>o MOOC</li> <li>o Blog</li> <li>o Comments</li> </ul> <p>Twitter                  To do: LinkedIn Group!                  YouTube                  IMS Newsletter</p>	
<p><b>Cost structure</b>                  Portal hosting + management</p>		<p><b>Revenue streams</b>                  Access to :</p>		



<p>Events (admin, venue, follow up) Time to deliver MOOC Ongoing governance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- repository</li> <li>- MOOC</li> <li>- Events</li> <li>- Fee for membership</li> </ul> <p>Conference fee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Consulting fee</li> <li>· Advertising fee</li> </ul>
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