

Appropriating the UN's credibility

We face the reality of parties describing themselves as 'UNTP-compliant' or 'UNTP-registered' and/or issuing 'UNTP-credentials' following the 'UNTP protocol'.

If these same parties are issuing credentials for which the linked data indicates **no objective reason to judge the credential as trustworthy**, we must consider how this reflects on the UNECE Recommendation No. 49 design principles for trustworthy product information.

Schemes versus Standards

We are not seeking to specify which standards* are permitted to be used for the purpose of assessing products and/or facilities.

*Information on the standards (or a specific criterion drawn from a 'scheme vocabulary') is available within the issued conformity credential and the buyer can determine suitability.

Rather, we are talking about the **credibility of the scheme itself**, as a basis for confidence in the value of the conformity credential. This becomes doubly important where the **scheme is directly responsible for issuing conformity credentials or approves other parties to do so**. Such scenarios are relatively common in the sustainability space, unlike, say, for product safety attributes.

Comprehensive scheme evaluation

There are widely varying approaches used for evaluating schemes, but **not all evaluation approaches provide confidence.**

For credible scheme evaluation, *irrespective of the approach used*, we need assurance that the evaluation process addresses the following aspects:

- Scheme governance
- Development of scheme
- Scheme standards development
- Personnel competency
- Conformity assessment

Integrity of scheme evaluation

We also need assurance that these aspects are **assessed against credible international standards**, to avoid lightweight scheme evaluations that might 'gloss over' scheme shortcomings.

Lastly, the party performing the evaluation of a scheme should have some inherent basis for credibility or, at least, have 'something to lose' **if found to perform evaluations without integrity**.

Trust per UNECE Recommendation 49

“Trust in sustainability information...includes the possibility of using digitally verifiable documents, issued by **recognized authorities**, as formal declarations of compliance, sustainability, or product characteristics. This would also involve **trustworthy actors** such as government bodies and accredited conformity assessment organizations. (page 6)

“Increases the market value of products with **credible sustainability credentials**” (page 9)