

Do we expect 'objectively credible' substantiation of claims?

UNECE Recommendation 49 contains 50 instances of the words trust, trustworthy, trusted, trustworthiness

Two different aspects arise in relation to conformity credentials:

1. whether the basis for *trusting or not trusting* UNTP credentials is made clear
2. Whether UNTP conformity credentials should be *trustworthy in general*

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)

UNECE Recommendation 49

“...**assessments**, such as certification, used to support a claim are conducted by parties holding appropriate **authorization and accreditation**” (page 8)

Formal conformity assessment and certification can be very costly. **High integrity primary evidence** such as satellite survey data may achieve greater confidence... at a lower cost. (page 17)

UNTP Spec - logical model

The Conformity Credential logical model has provision for trust-related Codelists: *Attestation type*; *Assessor Level*; *Assessment Level*, plus provision for linking to an external CAB ‘endorsement’ credential (such as an accreditation).

The conformity credential links also to the *scheme under which the credential is issued* (if applicable) but, as yet, there is no provision for a trust-related Codelist for the scheme or for linking to a *scheme ‘endorsement’* (such as independent scheme benchmarking)... *a gap in transparency?*

Trade context beyond EU DPPs

Sustainability discussion is often occurring in the context of EU DPPs, where the integrity of product claims is regulated anyway.

The wider global trade context is complex, yet global norms do exist and may be reflected in binding inter-governmental arrangements, such as FTAs and the WTO TBT Agreement. Conformity assessment of sustainability claims doesn't occur inside a bubble but in the midst of a well-established space (1M people are engaged in the TIC sector worldwide).

How may UNTP retain a measure of credibility within the wider trade context?

Appropriating the UN's credibility

What are we to make of parties describing themselves as 'UNTP-compliant' or 'UNTP-registered'? Or issuing 'UNTP-credentials' following 'UNTP protocols'?

If these same parties were issuing credentials for which the linked data indicates *no objective reason to judge the credential as trustworthy*, how does this align with the intent of UNECE Recommendation 49 for trustworthy product information?

It would seem a nice idea if unrelated parties could observe *“no you aren't UNTP-compliant, because here is one of your credentials that doesn't meet the defined minimum data set for credibility”*

How I see our UNTP-conformity challenge

Can we prepare a technical recommendation for the issuance of **objectively credible conformity credentials** which:

- respects the intent of UNECE Rec 49
- can be understood in relation to existing trade norms
- can be encoded such that a non-credible credential would 'fail' the default UN test harness*

*a 'failing' credential might still be freely shared/referenced, but any claim of it being UNTP-compliant would be *demonstrably wrong*