



*Fostering Governmental Support for Open Educational Resources  
Internationally (FGSOERI)*

Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and UNESCO

Regional Policy Forum for the Europe Region  
Cambridge, United Kingdom  
17 April 2012

**REPORT**

## REPORT

### Background

The project *Fostering Governmental Support for Open Educational Resources Internationally (FGSOERI)* is organising six regional policy forums (RPF), one in each UNESCO region, between January and May 2012.

The fourth regional policy forum, for the Europe Region, was held in Cambridge, United Kingdom, on 17 April 2012, as part of the Cambridge 2012 Open CourseWare Consortium/SCORE Conference: *Innovation and Impact – Openly Collaborating to Enhance Education*.

This RPF was co-organised by UNESCO (HQ) and the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), which acknowledge gratefully the assistance of the conference hosts in making arrangements for the RPF.

This report gives the input from the Europe Region to the project, which focussed on reviewing version 3 of the Paris Declaration. This input has been taken into account in preparing version 4 of the Declaration which was posted on April 17 with the invitation to make further comments until 20 April, when it will be finalised for presentation to the RPF for Asia and the Pacific on 23-24 April.

The Europe RPF consisted of two elements.

### Plenary Presentation and Discussion

In a one-hour plenary session Sir John Daniel gave an update on the project. The text and slides for the paper, which was prepared with Stamenka Uvalić-Trumbić, are at: <http://www.col.org/resources/speeches/2012presentations/Pages/2012-04-17.aspx>

In the discussion period following the plenary presentation the following issues were raised:

- The Paris Declaration should not rush governments into adopting a highly technical document.
- OER initiatives are increasingly at the school level (textbooks and resources).
- More clarity is needed about whether there is public access to the OECD survey data.
- Governments need time to make publicly-funded materials available as OER because of their historical approach to acquiring resources (e.g. textbooks) and the need to remove third party copyrights before moving to open licensing.
- There are gaps of perception and experience between the grassroots communities promoting OER and governments.

## **Focused Discussion**

The plenary session was followed by a one-hour breakout session, moderated by Sir John Daniel, which reviewed version 3 of the Paris Declaration. Participants were broadly satisfied with this version and made a number of editorial suggestions which were incorporated into the draft of version 4 and posted for comment.

The following general comments were also made:

- OER can improve learning outcomes as well as helping countries implement the legal right to education by increasing access in a cost-efficient manner.
- OER should be promoted as part of the wider goal of developing and sharing content and knowledge.
- More work is needed on demonstrating the business case for OER. Sir John informed the meeting that COL has commissioned a paper on the topic that will be presented to the OER Congress in June. Cable Green said that Creative Commons would provide input to this work.
- The potential contribution of OER to expanding lifelong learning opportunities should receive more emphasis.
- This project of COL and UNESCO is an important foundation for future work.
- Greater collaboration and sharing will help research in all disciplines.
- OER is not only about use – it also includes quality creating and sharing (co-creating) of materials.
- Quality in OER development includes innovation and taking advantage of technological advances.

## **Participants**

The OCW/SCORE conference brought together some 250 participants representing mostly OER practitioners and a few government policy-makers.

The break-out session of the Forum that discussed the Paris Declaration brought together 18 participants representing both OER practitioners and government policy-makers from UNESCO's Europe Region, which includes some 50 countries of the geographic Europe as well as Canada, Israel and the United States of America. Representatives mandated by governments from 5 Member States participated in the Forum/session. There were also two OER practitioner participants from Brazil.

(Annex1: List of participants).

## **Information base**

By the time this RPF was held the project had received replies to the Survey from 17 Member States of the Europe Region: Austria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belgium (FR), Bulgaria, Canada, Finland, Italy, Cyprus, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Monaco, Netherlands, Poland and Slovenia. The USA had promised to respond to the survey within a short time.

All participants were given the draft Declaration (version 3) produced after the Latin America RPF, as well as a background note for the project and a flyer for the 2012 World OER Congress. A dedicated web-space (<http://oercongress.weebly.com>) was created for the project and is being updated regularly, as each Regional Policy Forum occurs.

## **Wrap-Up and Way Forward**

In his concluding remarks Sir John Daniel detailed the next steps in the project, noting that version 4 of the Paris Declaration would be open for comment on the project Weebly until April 20 and then would be presented for further input at the RPF for Asia-Pacific in Bangkok on April 23-24. Thereafter version 5 will be drafted and submitted to the Arab States RPF on May 7-8 in Oman.

Following the Arab States RPF a draft of version 6 of the Declaration reflecting the input of all the RPFs will be submitted to the International Advisory and Liaison Group (IALG) at its meeting on 11 May 2012. This Group will also constitute the Drafting Group at the Congress itself.

A Summary Report of the Europe Region Forum will be produced and posted within 3 days. This report, together with the Declaration v.4 will constitute the input to the project from the Europe Region.

Sir John thanked the participants for their comments on the Declaration and their good suggestions for its improvement.

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(with input from Sir John Daniel, Project Director  
& Stamenka Uvalić-Trumbić, Senior Consultant)

2012-04-18

Annexes:

1. List of participants
2. Paris Declaration v.4

## Annex 1

### List of Participants Group Discussions April 17, 2012

#### Government Representatives

Name	Country	Organisation	e-mail
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#### Other participants

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Annex 2

Paris Declaration V4