

**2012 WORLD OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES (OER) CONGRESS
UNESCO, PARIS, JUNE 20-22, 2012**

DRAFT DECLARATION (VERSION 1)

Note on the drafting process

This first version of a Draft Declaration on OER for submission to the World OER Congress was prepared by the Secretariat following the first meeting of the International Advisory and Liaison Group (IALG) held at UNESCO, Paris on December 19, 2011. It will be presented for further comment and redrafting at policy forums that will be held in all UNESCO regions between January and May, 2012 and will then be reviewed by the IALG when it meets on May 14, 2012 prior to submission to the Congress. Successive drafts will be posted on the UNESCO-CI and Commonwealth of Learning websites.*

**The IALG to the COL/UNESCO project Fostering Governmental Support for Open Educational Resources Internationally is composed of up to 15 members identified by UNESCO's regional electoral groups and representatives from NGOs and other IGOs (e.g. OECD, Creative Commons, OERAfrica). It is co-chaired by the UNESCO ADG/CI and the President of COL.*

Preamble

Information and communications technologies (ICTs) can help to ensure equitable access to educational opportunities throughout the world. Having learning materials freely available for adaptation and repurposing can reduce the cost of expanding access to learning of quality.

Open Educational Resources (OER) are teaching, learning and research materials in any medium that reside in the public domain and have been released under an open licence that permits access, use, repurposing, reuse and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions.

In 2000 the Millennium Declaration and Dakar World Forum on Education for All defined a challenging agenda for the expansion and improvement of education and training, setting a number of targets to be achieved by 2015.

In 2003 the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) included these targets in its Action Plan:

- To adapt all primary and secondary school curricula to meet the challenges of the Information Society, taking into account national circumstances; and,
- to encourage the development of content and to put in place technical conditions in order to facilitate the presence and use of all world languages on the Internet.

The steady expansion of the availability of ICTs can contribute to the attainment of these goals, in particular by facilitating the creation, distribution, repurposing and use of OER.

The roles of governments/competent authorities in education and their relationships with institutions in different education sectors vary widely from country to country. However, governments/competent authorities usually have an important policy-setting role in their education systems. They can ensure that public investments in education make a useful and cost-effective contribution to socio-economic development.

In this context, governments/competent authorities may choose to require that educationally useful material developed with public funds be made available under open licences. While there may sometimes be reasons for not requiring open licensing, sharing educational materials widely has significant potential to improve the quality, transparency, accessibility

and local relevance of learning resources. Likewise, governments/competent authorities can use open licensing regimes to increase the leverage of public investments in learning resources by facilitating their widespread re-use with minimal additional investment.

In this context, governments/competent authorities attending the UNESCO World OER Congress declare that they will:

- a. *Support the use of OER through their policy-making role in education.* This could include encouraging and supporting the use of OER to adapt learning experiences to a greater diversity of learners and support social inclusion agendas. This will encourage equitable access to education and training while improving learning outcomes. Programmes of support for OER creation and re-use could facilitate sustainability.
- b. *Contribute to raising awareness of key OER issues.* This could include the identification and sharing of good practice to support implementation. Education communities need to understand intellectual property rights and how they are evolving with the rapid digitisation and online sharing of information and resources.
- c. *Promote strategies for ICTs in education in their jurisdictions.* As well as fostering the development of infrastructure and connectivity, these strategies should encourage the development and use of learning materials in digital formats, preferably in the form of OER.
- d. *Promote and adopt open licensing frameworks.* An open licensing framework might form part of an overall policy framework on IPR and copyright in education spanning both research and teaching activities. It might also cover the copyright and IPR status of educational materials produced by government departments and agencies.
- e. *Promote and adopt open standards.* Adopting appropriate open standards can help to facilitate sharing of educational resources by ensuring the perpetuity of editable electronic documents regardless of changing software. Such standards could cover educational materials produced by government departments and agencies and government-supported institutions that develop educational resources.
- f. *Support the sustainable development, quality and sharing of learning materials.* Education institutions need supporting, individually or collectively, in their efforts to produce and share high quality educational resources. This could include initiatives to develop local content and regional/global efforts to develop OER repositories and directories, as well as fostering quality assurance mechanisms to promote quality in OER.
- g. *Encourage development of OER in a variety of languages.* Although, as in earlier Internet-related developments, many of the first generation of OER were created in English they are now appearing in many languages. Authorities should encourage the production and use of OER in local languages and intergovernmental organisations should encourage the international flow of OER.

Conclusion

OER can contribute to human development by:

- facilitating the creation of a global intellectual commons;
- assisting the achievement of Education for All; and
- giving greater impact to public funds invested in education.

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