Regional Consultations on Open Educational Resources:
Interim Report

Following a proposal by the Government of Slovenia to the 199th Executive Board of UNESCO, the 2nd World OER Congress is scheduled to be held in Ljubljana on 18–20 September 2017, hosted by the Government of Slovenia to promote international collaboration on Open Educational Resources (OER). This will mark five years since the first World OER Congress was organized jointly by COL and UNESCO with support from Hewlett Foundation. In the year leading up to the 2nd World OER Congress, COL, in partnership with UNESCO and the Government of Slovenia, is conducting surveys of governments and key stakeholders, and holding six regional consultations to:

- identify the current status of the recommendations made at the World OER Congress amongst key stakeholders, namely governments, policy makers, the OER community and the wider education community;
- initiate discussions regarding the identified challenges to mainstreaming OER, as highlighted in the outcome report of the OER Road Map meeting (UNESCO, Paris 2016);
- build awareness amongst key stakeholders about the objectives of the 2nd World OER Congress and make recommendations for consideration; and
- encourage more governments to commit to the adoption of open licensing policies for educational materials developed with public funds.

The theme of the regional consultations is "OER for Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education: From Commitment to Action" and the meeting schedules are as follows:

Region	Date	Venue
Asia	Dec 1-2, 2016	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Europe	Feb 23-24, 2017	Valletta, Malta
Middle East / North Africa	Feb 27-28, 2017	Doha, Qatar
Africa	March 2-3, 2017	Port Louis, Mauritius
Latin America and Caribbean	April 3-4, 2017	São Paulo, Brazil
Pacific	May 29-30, 2017	Auckland, New Zealand

Process
COL President & CEO chaired a steering committee consisting of members from COL, UNESCO, Government of Slovenia and Hewlett. A Task Force with members of the partner

organisations was constituted to guide the process of the regional consultations. So far, four regional consultations have been completed, and each of these followed a similar approach covering, key presentations on OER developments in the region, the link of OER and SDG4, recommendations on how to address the challenges outlined in the UNESCO's OER Roadmap meeting held in March 2016, and the identification of concrete actions to mainstream OER. At each of the consultations, an overview of the data gathered was also shared. The participants in the consultations belonged to government, educational institutions, OER experts, civil society and private enterprises. Over 208 participants attended the four consultations in Asia; Europe; Middle East and North Africa; and Africa.

Major Recommendations

During the regional consultations, the participants were engaged in group discussions and presented their recommendations. While the process is still in progress, some of the key recommendations emerging out of the four regional consultations are outlined below:

Policy
- Policies are needed at both national and institutional levels.
- Governments must help universities to change. Governments must provide the mechanism for universities to change both mindset and culture. This can be done by funding incentives, new paths for career progression and development within academia, embracing Open Education Practices and accepting the development of OER as a contribution to knowledge rather than judging performance based on publications alone.

Capacity Building
- Mindset is a big barrier to capacity building and it is necessary to create an appropriate environment to support OER.
- People need training on how to create and handle OER. Encouraging students to use OER can create a culture of openness.
- Mobile apps can be used for capacity building.
- Involve teachers to support colleague teachers to use OER in their own environment.

Ensuring Equitable Access to OER
- Focus on increasing Internet connectivity and broadband.
- Provide offline access to educational materials.
- Use mobile devices to provide access to OER.
- Develop OER in accessible formats.

Business Model
- Political will is necessary to change existing business models and implement new ones.
- Governments need to conduct experiments with alternative business models by devoting part of their budgets for educational resources and experimental schemes.
- Use different models of delivery of OER to learners.

- Examples of commercial actors implementing open business models need to be better analysed (for example: Sesamath, Lumen Learning, OpenStax), especially in terms of potential mainstreaming.
- Use collaborative and consortia approach to OER production and sustainability.

Language and Culture
- Institution-level initiatives needed to build capacity in faculties and technical staff.
- Language barriers can be reduced through capacity building for the contextualization and localization of OER.
- Institutions should have policies to handle culturally sensitive resources.
- Governments should support and encourage development of flexible curricula that would embrace language and cultural diversity.
- Educational Institutions should encourage cross cultural collaboration at institutional level and at the level of teaching staff.
- Technology innovations can be harnessed to translate OER into different languages.

Conclusion
COL will develop two reports—one, to present the findings of the global surveys and two, a synthesis report on the actions recommended for specific stakeholders by the participants of the regional consultations. These will form part of the documentation for the 2nd World OER Congress.

Commonwealth of Learning
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