

# Librarians in Action for Open Education

## Implementing the UNESCO OER Recommendation

European Network of Open Education Librarians

STRATEGIC PLAN

2021 - 2023

## Introduction

The [European Network of Open Education Librarians](#) (ENOEL) brings together European librarians who are committed to acting in support of Open Education’s growth. The network was established in 2018 by SPARC Europe, a foundation committed to promoting and working for Open Science/Open Scholarship and Open Education in Europe. We stimulate the growth, adoption and use of Open Educational Resources and the development of policy that supports it.

The ENOEL identity builds on the following definitions:

- According to [SPARC](#): “**Open Education** encompasses resources, tools and practices that are free of legal, financial and technical barriers and can be fully used, shared and adapted in the digital environment.”
- **Open Educational Resources** (OER) are defined by [UNESCO](#) as “learning, teaching and research materials in any format and medium that reside in the public domain or are under copyright that have been released under an open license, that permit no-cost access, reuse, repurpose, adaptation and redistribution by others.” OER are available under an open licence, allowing them to be retained, revised, remixed, reused and redistributed (the so-called “5Rs”, as proposed by [David Wiley](#)). Increased availability of OER provides an alternative to educational resources from publishers and thus creates space for negotiation.
- **Open Educational Practices** are defined by [Catherine Cronin](#) as “collaborative practices that include the creation, use and reuse of OER, as well as pedagogical practices employing participatory technologies and social networks for interaction, peer-learning, knowledge creation, and empowerment of learners.”

Our “Open” work includes facilitating Open Education, increasing Open Educational Resources (OER), Open Educational Practices, Open Pedagogy, Open Educational Policies, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs, when released with open licenses), Open Textbooks, and Open Badge Microcredentials. This work also draws on the good practices of Open Access, Open Data, and Open Science. Open Source Software, Open Hardware, and Open Licensing are the infrastructure that makes Open Education possible.

The ENOEL is defined by (but not limited to) the following documents:

- [Article 26 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights](#) states that the Right to Education is fundamental to global efforts in enabling accessible, equitable learning opportunities for everyone. Policymakers and Open Education practitioners are making concerted efforts to build on this goal.
- The [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#) in the UN 2030 Agenda call all countries to action toward specific issues that can lead us to a more peaceful and prosperous future. In particular, [SDG 4](#) — “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all,” — makes it apparent how hard education has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused a critical slowdown at all levels, particularly for the already low-income and poorest regions. Despite education being a basic human right, worldwide access to it and participation is still limited, which is why increasing OE policy and OER is all the more urgent.

- UNESCO's [Education in a post-Covid World](#) (2020) publication for action tells us: "Covid-19 has brought many existing patterns and trends to the surface. On the one hand, we have been shown many weaknesses and vulnerabilities: these include an accentuation of inequality, risks that follow from the privatization of education, and just how unprepared we were for a massive shift to digital and distance learning. On the other hand, some positive features within our societies have also become increasingly visible. We are seeing solidarity and a strong, resilient response to challenges in many societies. We are seeing increased attention to the public good. And, we are seeing resourcefulness, dedication and creativity from the many teachers, families and students who are collaboratively building remarkable learning experiences." This analysis resonates powerfully with Open Education. For more on some of the challenges with Covid-19, see [Guidance on Open Educational Practices during School Closures: Utilizing OER under COVID-19 Pandemic in line with UNESCO OER Recommendation](#) (2020).
- The [UNESCO OER Recommendation](#), ratified in November 2019, supports the creation, use and adaptation of inclusive and quality OER, and facilitates international cooperation in this field. Its adoption by well over 100 UNESCO Member States would mean greatly progressing towards a more open and inclusive knowledge society. It also contributes to accelerating the achievement of the UN 2030 Agenda. It concentrates on five areas of action: building capacity, developing supportive policy, encouraging inclusive and equitable quality OER, nurturing the creation of sustainability models, and promoting and reinforcing international cooperation.

Librarians are key stakeholders who can facilitate sharing knowledge for the public good to help advance society. Together with students, teachers, families, decision makers and policymakers, they help give every person the opportunity to build a better life by turning children into conscious citizens, learners into peer-to-peer teachers, and employees into skilled staff.

Libraries in Higher Education are key partners in making Europe's educational resources and practices open and reusable. The Hewlett Foundation recognises the key contribution librarians can provide and supports the network by funding its work to implement the UNESCO OER Recommendation. Academic librarians around Europe are already involved in collaboratively building experiences in the areas of actions that UNESCO proposes with its OER Recommendation. The SPARC Europe report *Open Education in European Libraries of Higher Education* concludes: "To further accelerate OE and OER efforts, libraries must collaborate to build a more open, creative, legally and technically sound, and informed education environment to facilitate access to education material for all."

The ENOEL will support them in this collaboration. This strategy document will help provide a common direction for the ENOEL going forward.

## Librarians in Action for Open Education

Librarians are in a unique position to advance Open Education by bringing experience in both publishing and facilitating access to knowledge to both creators and consumers. They connect research and education stakeholders with content in new ways; they are also highly service-oriented. According to the results of the survey SPARC Europe conducted in 2019 reported in the [Envisioning Report for Empowering Universities](#), librarians are taking an important role in advancing Open Education in Europe and the evidence shows that libraries are playing to their strengths as Open information and knowledge managers, facilitators, and disseminators. Indeed, some libraries are taking the lead to drive OE forward in their institutions and are working from the control rooms of teaching and learning or scholarly communication with a range of institutional departments to further OE and OER, although such work clearly needs to be increased. In addition, some libraries are advocates for Open Research and Open Education, and they provide essential support in information literacy and discovery, along with copyright and licensing. Furthermore, libraries could do more to support co-creation and other knowledge activities scaffolding Open Education, with innovative work here the exception rather than the rule.

Some librarians are already showing resourcefulness, dedication and creativity on a daily basis as part of their services to the education community, and they are playing a key role in supporting the right to education and in advancing the interests and capabilities of learners. Their approach, skills, and attitudes to education are already well aligned with Open Education values and approach.

As ambassadors, they are striving to:

- promote Open Education in their institutions and amongst a range of stakeholders;
- raise awareness of the benefits of Open Education;
- help advocate for the use and creation of OER;
- advise on copyright and licensing to enable teachers to create and reuse OER;
- help promote the reuse of OER;
- promote the design and implementation of OE policies at institutional, local, national, and international levels;
- keep up-to-date with developments in the larger OE Community, and share these.

As facilitators, they partner with students, teachers, policymakers and fellow librarians to help:

- create OER;
- transform educational resources into OER;
- locate and make diverse quality OER more easily accessible to all;
- assess the quality of OER;
- develop, adopt and adapt OE practices;
- preserve OER for future use;
- identify and share OER good practices;
- make OE and OER (as output) visible and rewardable (e.g. by working on DOI for OER as well);
- lead training activities on OE and OER.

The ENOEL contributes to creating the awareness, culture, and support needed to make the Open Education infrastructure function better with librarians' contribution. The ENOEL serves members who are at different levels of OE maturity.

Access to OER is key for both learners and educators. Librarians play a key role to:

- ease access and advise on how to find, share and reuse OER;
- support the co-creation of new open learning opportunities;
- take advantage of the opportunities provided by technologies to catalogue, create metadata, store OER, and help those to participate in collaborative virtual spaces;
- offer a range of services to researchers, teachers and learners, with increasingly the skill-set and resources to match;
- provide a significant contribution to enhance progress in facilitating access to education by being at both decision-making and policy-making tables.

Moreover, librarians have different levels of knowledge and practice according to different national education contexts and organisations; supporting each other in upskilling their profiles is one of the most effective professional development pathways they can build on together. Librarians join ENOEL on a voluntary basis and activities and initiatives are built upon collaboration and teamwork.

## The Vision

The long-term vision is that libraries in Higher Education are key trusted partners in making Europe's educational resources and practices open and reusable.

## The Mission

Our mission is to support Europe's Higher Education librarians, ambassadors, and facilitators of Open Education to help implement the UNESCO OER Recommendation. We seek to enable the conditions and opportunities to maximise the access, use and reuse of Open Educational Resources for all, whilst respecting and favouring diversity, affordability and equity to meet local needs.

## The Target Groups

Our primary target group is the European Higher Education librarian community.

Libraries are a central facility of a university; they are increasingly developing their roles as information and knowledge creators and facilitators, in particular by supporting universities in reaching Open Access and Open Science goals. They have strong competencies in managing, finding, curating and offering/sharing content. They have years of experience both in facilitating easier access to research and in advocating for open access to information. Open Education can largely benefit at EU level from the contribution of the Network's members, from the proactive role they can take sitting at decision-making tables, and from the resourceful peer-to-peer interaction they can enhance with ENOEL supporting igniting activities.

Our secondary target groups are:

- Europe's research and education policymakers at the European Commission, the European Council, and European governments with education agendas;
- Europe's Higher Education communities, including senior university management, associations of universities, teachers and learners of all ages, and those that support them;
- Open Education infrastructure providers.

## The Goals

Our main goals for the next two years are focussed on helping implement the UNESCO OER Recommendation. Specifically, we intend to:

- raise awareness of OE, OER and OEP and advocate for it in the Higher Education community;
- increase knowledge on OE, OER and OEP amongst European librarians in Higher Education by tracking, sharing and communicating on OE developments with the intent to apply them more extensively;
- facilitate access to the Open Educational Resources that are already available for reuse, adoption, adaptation and remixing in different scenarios;
- provide guidance on how to reuse, adapt and remix existing OER;
- upskill librarians to build their capacity to become key partners in OE at institutional, regional, national, and European levels;
- promote diversity and equity in publishing Open Education Resources;
- support and grow European, national and organisational Open Education policymaking in Europe;
- grow the ENOEL network and expand the liaison with local, national, European, and global stakeholders to support each other in the implementation of the UNESCO OER Recommendation through shared initiatives and to avoid the duplication of effort.

## The Activities

To reach these goals, for Open Education to gain further traction in Europe and to implement the UNESCO OER Recommendation, ENOEL members will implement the following activities:

### Area 1 - Building Capacity

- Raise awareness of the benefits of Open Education, and Open Licensing to increase reuse, so that access to socially-just education becomes a reality.
- Liaise with other libraries and Open Education organisations to form partnerships for capacity building in Europe, also building on lessons learnt in Open Science.
- Monitor progress in OE by conducting an annual landscape survey of the OE support offering in libraries of Higher Education.
- Support librarian upskilling peer-to-peer activities in OE to advance talent development within the ENOEL community to sustain and advance OE through relationship-building, knowledge-exchange and mentoring.
- Actively engage with learners as key stakeholders to build their own learning pathways.

## Area 2 - Developing supportive policy for OER

- Encourage the development of OE and OER policy on an international European level based on evidence gained from the OE annual survey.
- Sit at decision-making tables to design effective policy guidelines and implementation strategies on local, national or international levels to support grass-roots efforts.

## Area 3 - Encouraging inclusive and equitable quality OER

- Support the evolution of “quality” definitions so that accessible, adaptable and affordable learning resources and approaches can be easily linked to, customised and accessed, also in multiple languages.
- Explore with other stakeholders how to make OER more inclusive and equitable.

## Area 4 - Nurturing the creation of sustainability models for OER

Raise awareness of the need to secure an Open Education infrastructure, and take action to seek to secure it, such as via collaborative, sustainable hosting platforms, metadata services and delivery formats.

## Area 5 - Promoting and reinforcing international cooperation in OER

Continue working with an international network of European institutions and other organisations with allied Open agendas in Europe and abroad. ENOEL key partners include (but are not limited to):

- [Centrum Cyfrowe](#)
- [Creative Commons](#)
- [ICDE](#)
- [IFLA](#)
- [LIBER](#)
- [OER World Map](#)
- [Open Education Global](#)
- [Open Education Network](#)
- [SPARC \(NA\)](#)
- [UNESCO OER Dynamic Coalition](#)

These activities will serve to accelerate progress in Open Education in Higher Education in Europe by sharing good practices, enabling common goal-setting, and managing challenges collectively.

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