

Fostering Governmental Support for OER Internationally

COL and UNESCO have embarked on an initiative that aims to encourage more governments to adopt policies that include OER.

This initiative seeks to advance the ideal of making educational resources developed with public funds freely available for re-use and re-purposing. The key event will be UNESCO's *2012 World Open Educational Resources (OER) Congress* to be held in Paris on 20-22 June 2012, which will be a milestone on the route to a further conference on OER and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) scheduled for 2015 – the target date for achieving the MDGs.

At the June 2012 World OER Congress governments will be invited to adopt a declaration (referred to as the 'Paris Declaration') that will include a clear definition of open licenses and encourage governments to support the principle that the products of publicly funded work should carry such licenses.

This initiative aims to:

- Increase understanding by governments of the significance of OER; and
- Encourage more governments to support the principle that the products of publicly funded work should carry such licenses.

See: <http://oercongress.weebly.com>
www.unesco.org/oercongress

The initiative includes the following activities:

- Sensitising governments to the significance of OER through public presentations, workshops and dialogue.
- Creating a worldwide inventory of public policy in relation to OER.
- Encouraging governments to adopt a declaration that includes a clear definition of open licenses and endorses the principle that the products of publicly funded work should carry such licenses.

1. Awareness Raising

An important part of the initiative is continued awareness raising with the aim that by June 2012 all governments understand the significance of OER and the open licensing of educational materials. The initiative is being presented in all regions of the world (see: www.col.org/speeches).

2. Information Gathering

An important element of the initiative is to conduct a worldwide survey of governments to determine whether they have policies to encourage OER and open licensing or whether they plan to develop such policies. This survey aims at creating a comprehensive inventory of government policies and intentions concerning OER, open access and open licensing. COL sent out questionnaires to all Commonwealth Ministers of Education in late 2011. Twenty-six responses had been received by February 1, 2012 and more continue to come in. More recently

UNESCO has sent out the questionnaire to its member states.

3. Consultation: Regional Policy Forums

To enrich the information gathered by the questionnaire survey, the project will hold regional policy forums in each of the UNESCO regions between January and May, 2012. Their purpose will be threefold: 1) to profile OER activities in the region; 2) to obtain further details about government OER policies or intentions to complement the mail survey and, 3) to seek input to the Declaration that will be presented to the World OER Congress in June 2012.

They are scheduled as follows:

Jan 24-26	Anglophone Caribbean - Barbados
Feb 21-22	Africa - Pretoria, South Africa
Mar 28-29	Latin America - Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Apr 17	Europe - Cambridge, UK
Apr 23-24	Asia/Pacific - Bangkok, Thailand
May 7-8	Arab Region - Muscat, Oman

4. International Advisory and Liaison Group

The International Advisory and Liaison Group, which is composed of government representatives from each UNESCO regions identified by its electoral group as well as selected representatives of IGOs (OECD) and NGOs (OER Africa, Creative Commons), is a vital element of the initiative. Its role is to be a formal link with UNESCO's member states and, especially, to involve them in the process of drafting the Declaration that will be presented to the World OER Congress in June 2012.

5. Paris Declaration

The consultations and regional forums will guide the preparation of a Draft Paris Declaration (see: <http://oercongress.weebly.com/paris-declaration.html>). This document will be considered, discussed and finalised for adoption at the World OER Congress.

6. World OER Congress

The World OER Congress will take place on Wednesday – Friday, 20 – 22 June 2012 at UNESCO HQ, Paris, France. The aims of the Congress are to:

- Showcase the world's best practices in OER policies, initiatives, and experts;
- Celebrate the 10th anniversary of the 2002 UNESCO Forum that coined the term OER; and
- Release the 2012 Paris Declaration

The Congress will bring together Ministers of Education/Human Resource Development, senior policy makers, expert practitioners, researchers and relevant stakeholders.

7. Information sharing

More information can be obtained from the Initiative website:

- <http://oercongress.weebly.com>

UNESCO:

- www.unesco.org/oercongress

Commonwealth of Learning:

- www.col.org/oercongress

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