

ERASMUS + Project:

561651-EPP-1-2015-1-IT-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP

**“A bottom-up approach for opening up education in
South-Mediterranean countries”**

<http://www.openmedproject.eu>

Open Education Day MOROCCO OER STRATEGY FORUM

Cadi Ayyad University, Marrakech
December 6th-7th, 2016

OpenMed, an overview

Openness in Higher Education seems to be common sense for the equal and democratic access to knowledge. Stimulating supply and demand for high-quality OERs is essential for modernising education. If universities really want to find more resources to invest in better teaching and research, it is essential that the open sharing of resources is encouraged. Knowledge must be shared and spread, teachers encouraged to network and collaborate on course development and institutions discouraged from fragmentation and all producing their own slight variations on the same course.

Using freely available resources teachers and students can together collaborate on compiling course material and resources, opening up the classrooms to new forms of learning. The learning experience will be greatly enhanced due to greater involvement. Before this can be realised, we need a change in attitudes towards what we mean by education, teaching and learning. We need new attitudes towards collaboration and new literacy.

OpenMed project is an initiative to support participation and adoption of Open Educational Resources (OER) and Open Educational Practices (OEP) as a bottom-up approach to support the modernization of HEIs in Morocco, Palestine and Egypt and Jordan, improving the quality of education and teaching. The initiative also opens the possibility to provide free educational resources for self-learners, in terms of informal and lifelong learning.

OpenMed, specific objectives

- (1) Raise awareness and widen HEI participation in open educational practices and resources;
- (2) Define the OER Agenda for the re-use of OER at HE institutional level;
- (3) Define mid-term strategic roadmaps for the implementation of the OER Agenda at local-institutional level according to the local, cultural and institutional needs and strategies;
- (4) Teach university teachers how to use and reuse OER in a pedagogically-rich context and improve their digital competences;

- (5) Pilot start-up open educational practices and offer to students flexible and up to date open contents and learning paths, with a linkage to the international community and the needs of the job market.

OpenMed, in the global change of education

The modernization of universities has been acknowledged not only as a core condition for the success of the broader Lisbon Strategy and the Bologna Process, but as part of the wider move towards an increasingly global and knowledge-based economy. Noteworthy that most universities are still locked into conventional strategies and the evolution of tertiary education systems in South-Mediterranean countries leads to some considerations on the equity of access and outcomes.

Enormous investments are being made worldwide to integrate the Internet into educational processes: broadband to connect schools and universities, laptops distributed to teachers and students at very competitive prices, computer laboratories built in universities. However, the focus is often on infrastructure but not necessarily on improving the educational contents or the teaching and learning practices. This does not necessarily create the ideal foundation for innovation in curricula and for the creation of cultures of collaboration aligned with the challenge that a knowledge based society demand.

The resistance to embrace institutional changes, the mistrust to exchange educational contents or the poor adoption of new learning environments are major constraints in HE institutions in South-Mediterranean Countries. The mismatch between the current knowledge based society and the refereed inflexible teaching practices demand an entirely new modus operandi regarding how the contents of HE are created, combined, updated and delivered.

Although learning resources are often considered as key intellectual property in a competitive HE world, many institutions and individuals worldwide are sharing their digital learning resources over the Internet openly and for free, as Open Educational Resources (OER). OER is a relatively new phenomenon, which may be seen as a part of a larger trend towards openness in HE and democratization of access and as a means to open up the curriculum to knowledge, materials and teaching methods from all over the world. The two most important aspects of openness have to do with free availability over the Internet and as few restrictions as possible on the use of the resource. There should be no technical barriers (undisclosed source code), no price barriers (subscriptions, licensing fees, pay-per-view fees) and as few legal permission barriers as possible (copyright and licensing restrictions) for the end user.

The OpenMed project believes that Open Education is here to stay. The real question is not “if” but “how” Open Education and open contents will co-exist in the instructional materials and overall HEIs strategies, including strategies to rethink HEIs cost structure, missions, international partnerships and blended learning experiences.

Nevertheless, the adoption of open practices in the South-Mediterranean countries remains unexploited. According to the Survey on Governments' Open Educational Resources (OER) Policies (Commonwealth of Learning and UNESCO, June 2012), the obstacle to OER adoption in the Arabic countries is Language and Cultural diversity according to the 33% of the respondent (against the 8,2% of the total across all responses). An enormous amount of OER is already available but because of unawareness of their existence or the lack of specific knowledge on how to localize and integrate them into actual practices of learning and curricula, or the lack of open strategies at HEIs managerial level and incentives, this rich worldwide potential rests underused. Education policy and initiatives that combine infrastructure investment with a coherent and localized "open" approach to contents are the most likely to have significant positive impact and realize the goals of the policy and a more inclusive education capable of inserting the learner in the knowledge society. Obviously teachers and students need a substantial knowledge base and clear concept of quality in education.

What count more is the capacity to learn lifelong, to think, research, find information and to adopt sustainable educational practices and mechanisms to provide knowledge not only to on-campus students but also beyond the walls of the institutions. The project understands the necessity to embrace integral and also inclusive actions that will be meaningful and relevant for the local beneficiaries, thus avoiding fragmentation of interventions. That is why this initiative envisions a multilevel and organic intervention, which articulates three key dimensions: contents, platforms and cultural aspects, which are briefly described as follows:

(1) Contents: understood as educational resources or pedagogic practices, which are openly and freely shared, promoting its continuing remixation (re-usability), updating and sharing.

(2) Platforms: hardware and software designed to simplify the interoperability of the resources, facilitating semantic structures (improving its findability) and the use of open standards and open source software that decreased its costs and trigger its adoption.

(3) Cultural Aspects: promoting the awareness, explaining the value of the openness, describing the educational and also the inter

(4) Institutional benefits, not only identifying best practices but implementing the needed incentives to foster these practices in a variety of teaching-learning environments.

OpenMed, an innovative character

Although OER and open access are supported by many stakeholders in the educational arena, their use in education in South-Mediterranean countries has not yet reached a critical mass. Most teachers use ICTs mainly to prepare their teaching, rather than to work together and with their students during lessons or connecting classrooms.

Even when OER, and most generally distance education, is actually implemented, focus remains on building more access to digital contents and too little consideration is given to whether this really fill in the knowledge gap of learners and the needs of the labour market. Many HEIs in South- Mediterranean countries do not yet participate in OER initiatives, not all

educators and students are aware of benefits and pitfalls of OER and a fragmentation of approaches and interoperability is registered.

Higher Education system in Morocco

Higher education in Morocco, regulated by Statute No 01-00, is the responsibility of the state, which provides for the planning, organisation, development, regulation and guidance of the system. The National Education and Training Charter of 1999 laid down the principles and guidelines for the reform of the Moroccan education system. Statute No 01-00 of May 2000 provided for the implementation of these principles and guidelines in the realm of higher education.

Improving the quality of outcomes in the education sector has become a key priority for Morocco's government. A comprehensive renovation of the education and training system was developed in a participatory manner in 1998-99, which led to the vision for long-term expansion of this sector in response to the country's social and economic development requirements. The outcome was the promulgation of the 1999 National Education and Training Charter (CNEF). The CNEF, with strong national consensus, declared 2000-2009 the decade for education and training, and established education and training as a national priority, second only to territorial integrity. The reform program, as laid out by the CNEF, also received strong support from the donor community. Nevertheless, during the course of implementation, the reform program encountered delays.

As part of the new educational reform, Moroccan universities have adopted the LMD system in 2003. The system of Bachelor', Master and doctoral degrees now prevails throughout the university structure except at the English-speaking University of Al Akhawaynin Ifrane, which maintains a system of four year Bachelor courses and Master degrees.

Master degrees were introduced in Morocco at the start of the 2006/2007 session; the new centres for doctoral studies, established in 2008, became operational in 2009. The studies are thus based on 3 grades:

- (1) Degree (6 semesters)
- (2) Master (10 semesters)
- (3) PhD (3 years after the Master).

In 2005 the Moroccan government adopted a strategy with the objective of making ICT accessible in all public schools to improve the quality of teaching; infrastructure, teacher training and the development of pedagogical content was also part of this national programme. The governance bodies in Morocco are:

- (1) Higher Council for Education (CSE) monitors and evaluates public policies related to education.
- (2) National Coordination Committee for Higher Education (CNCES) & the Coordinating Committee for Private Higher Education (COCESP). These two committees have been created as part of the quality assurance process of the reforms.

- (3) National Evaluation Authority whose role is to audit and evaluate education policies and works under the Higher Council of Education's supervision.
- (4) National Accreditation and Evaluation Committee (CNAE) is in charge of the accreditation process for masters and doctoral degrees and private institution degrees.

State of the Art of Open Education in Morocco

Morocco is among the most active Southern Mediterranean countries in the OER movement. The Ministry of National Education created the National Laboratory of Digital Resources, which produces and collates digital educational resources, some of which are OER. There are also several other projects in this field in Morocco. For example, the Korea International Cooperation Industry project produces digital resources that are free to access and use for scientific disciplines at the secondary education level in partnership with Al Akhawayn University in Morocco. There is also a Unit for the Promotion of Software and Open Educational Resources at the Moroccan- Korean Centre of ICT Training, which was created with the main objective of promoting the use of software and OER to support the national policy of widespread use of these technologies through the GENeralization of Information Technologies and Communication in Education (GENIE) programme by offering very low-cost, and often free, ICT solutions. The GENIE programme for secondary school incorporates OER, and the strategy adopted by the National Laboratory of Digital Resources of the Ministry of Education, where a reference to OER is presented in draft ministerial notes regarding validation and certification of digital resources that are in development.

Distance learning (involving some e-learning) is significantly increasing in Morocco in both public and private universities. The increased availability and functionality of information technology (IT) has brought new teaching tools to the Moroccan market, including mobile phones, video-conferencing, e-mail, discussion forums, chat software and document sharing. Morocco's finance ministry recently decided to integrate a dedicated distance learning service into its organisational structure. The Ministry of National Education has begun work on an interactive television system (TVI), which aims to provide remote training for teachers across the Kingdom. Despite the growing popularity of e-learning in Morocco, it is still in its infancy.

To make a representative example, the increasing number of university students in Morocco and the scattering of university structures urged the adoption of distance method of education, currently mainly translated in the creation of e-learning centres and ICT platforms.

Today, to face this *massification* and to encourage online production of quality learning a national Moroccan platform is being created for all HE institutions. MUN (Maroc Université Numérique) is an OpenEdx technology platform that will centralize contents and provides services to all HE institutions.

National Strategy Forum

As well as for all other South Mediterranean countries, Morocco has scheduled the first two days meeting on December 6 to 7, 2016 at Cadi Ayyad University of Marrakech with the collaboration of OpenMed coordinator (UNIMED), European partners (POLITO, UNIR, US, CU) and AArU. The two representatives of Morocco in the consortium are Cadi Ayyad University and Ibn Zohr University.

The strategy forum is a national seminar aimed at gathering together educators and managers from HEIs in Morocco expected to provide opinions and consensus on the OER Agenda and local roadmap(s). In addition to Cadi Ayyad and Ibn Zohr universities, other public and private Moroccan universities, Higher Council for Education, Ministries of National and Higher Education, professional bodies in charge of OER, are invited to debate and review during this seminar experiences that exist locally or at national level.

The **first objective** of the National Strategy Forum is to give the possibility to South-Mediterranean Higher Education stakeholders to discuss, revise, and validate the Open Educational Resources (OER) Regional Agenda that is being developed by OpenMed. The OpenMed OER Regional Agenda is a long-term plan presenting challenges and priorities for opening up Higher Education in the South-Mediterranean countries, outlining possible strategic actions aimed at maximising the benefits of Open Education Practices and the use, reuse and remix of OER for university course development, thus facilitating equity, access to and democratisation of Higher Education.

The OER Agenda builds on the existing OE-related declarations, both on a global scale (namely the Cape Town Open Education Declaration and the 2012 Paris UNESCO OER declaration) and both on national policies, namely the national programme for IT of the Ministry of HE in Morocco.

The **second objective** of the event is to widen participation in Open Educational Resources (OER) and Open Educational Practices in Higher Education in the South-Mediterranean countries, by:

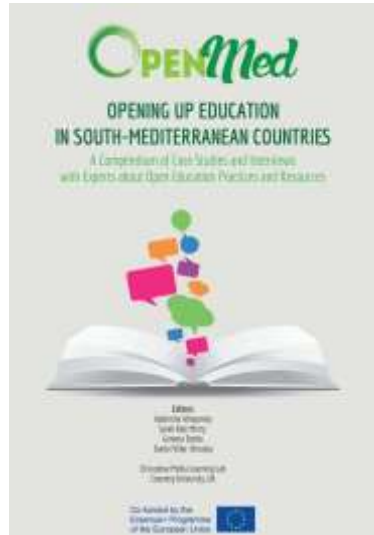
- Promoting the development and adoption of Open Educational Resources and Practices in South-Mediterranean universities, with a particular focus on Egypt, Morocco, Jordan and Palestine;
- Showcasing outstanding cases of OER adoption;
- Fostering networking among policy makers, university leaders, educators and OER experts from Europe and South-Mediterranean countries.

In terms of **expected impact**, the Forums will:

- **Build consensus** within the academic communities on Open Education principles that will benefit higher education in the South-Mediterranean countries
- Define a **common long-term strategic plan** for the adoption of Open Educational Practices at institutional level, suitable for the South-Mediterranean countries (OER Agenda)

OpenMed, initial results

A Compendium of Case Studies and Interviews with Experts about Open Education Practices and Resources



This compendium was created by partners on the OpenMed project and edited by staff at the Disruptive Media Learning Lab at Coventry University, UK, with significant contributions made by expert interviewees in international open education. It is aimed at:

- Higher education practitioners with involvement or interest in open educational resources and practices
- IT professionals with responsibility for supporting the use of online and open education
- Institutional, national and international managers with responsibility for furthering the appropriate and quality use of open educational resources and practices
- Newcomers who wish to have an overview of the field of open education in the South Mediterranean region specifically, and worldwide generally
- Higher education and open education international stakeholders.

The compendium is essential reading for anyone with an interest in international open education, particularly in the South Mediterranean region. It is the first major output from the OpenMed project, which focuses upon increasing open education in the South Mediterranean region. Consequently, the report provides comprehensive background information on the state of open education in Egypt, Morocco, Palestine, and Jordan, and in-depth insight into open education in the eight participating South Mediterranean partner universities.

The compendium begins by delineating the key concepts and definitions associated with open education, providing a clear and succinct introduction for those new to the area. It then presents **eleven case studies of international open educational practices across Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Morocco, Spain, UK, North America, and South Africa.** The eleven case studies, which were reviewed by OpenMed partners and international experts in open

education, were selected because they represented the unique range of practices in open education and demonstrate the importance of recognizing individual contexts in determining good practices.

International experts in open education were asked to comment on relevant initiatives and share recommendations with the aim of facilitating and encouraging the adoption of open education in the South Mediterranean region. These experts were from the South Mediterranean region, Europe, and the wider international open education community, and the full interview recordings are available here [link to full interview recordings]. These experts provided important insight into the individual case studies, and helped to shape the 22 recommendations made for the continued improvement of open education practices and resources in the South Mediterranean region. These recommendations were categorized under the following five themes:

- Top-down and bottom-up implementation
- Supporting staff in using and integrating open practices and open resources
- Collaborative creation in communities of practice
- Enhancing the quality of student learning
- Licensing of OER content.

The OpenMed team hopes that by making this report publicly available, we can embody the principles of openness and collaboration underpinning open education.

Link to the Compendium publication: <http://openmedproject.eu/results/compendium/>

Draft OER Regional Agenda for the South-Mediterranean (consultation document)

The **OpenMed OER Regional Agenda for the South-Mediterranean**, starting from an understanding of the long-term challenges and priorities which are necessary for opening up Higher Education in the South Mediterranean countries, presents a set of strategic actions aimed at maximising the benefits of OER and OEP to increase the access, the quality and the equity of Higher Education in the region.

The present version of the OER Regional Agenda is based on the results of the OpenMed group discussion held in Coventry University, UK, on May 3-4, 2016 and on the findings and recommendations of the OpenMed Compendium on OE and OER practices in the South-Mediterranean region. The OER Regional Agenda will be debated in the four National Strategy Forums, taking into account the specific needs and insights of the academic communities of these countries.

In a nutshell, the OER Regional Agenda aims to:

- Suggest mechanisms for enhancing students access to Higher Education;
- Suggest mechanisms to promote improvement of quality of teaching and learning practices;
- Support participant universities to widen participation in Open Education;
- Create awareness on the benefits of OER use, reuse and remix for university course development;
- Support the collaboration among universities on issues related to Open Education.

The OER Agenda is aimed at managers, decision-makers, educators and other members of staff (e.g. university librarians, technical IT staff) from universities in the South-Mediterranean countries and for all organisations engaged in teaching and learning.

The overarching **vision** behind the OER Regional Agenda, is that *“Opening up education and sharing academic content may lead to improved networking, collaboration and integration of HEI systems, through comprehensive development and creation of a relevant interrelated platforms of content within and outside HEIs.*

The adoption of OER and OEP aims to guarantee a higher accessibility to HE and to diversify the channels and means to learn and update the knowledge of learners. In briefs, Open Education can truly change higher education and make it better, more accessible and relevant, all features befitting a global knowledge-sharing society.”

Link to the Open Revision of the OER Regional Agenda for the South-Mediterranean:
<http://openmedproject.eu/results/oer-regional-agenda/>

OpenMed Partners

Partners' countries



Members of the Consortium

- [UNIMED, Mediterranean Universities Union](#), Italy (coordinator)
- [POLITO, Politecnico di Torino](#), Italy
- [UNIR, Universidad Internacional de La Rioja](#), Spain
- [US, University of Seville](#), Spain
- [COV, Coventry University](#), UK
- [CU, Cairo University](#), Egypt
- [AU, Alexandria University](#), Egypt
- [UCA, Cadi Ayyad University](#), Morocco
- [UIZ, Université Ibn Zohr](#), Morocco
- [BZU, Birzeit University](#), Palestine
- [ANNU, An-Najah National University](#), Palestine
- [AArU, Association of Arab Universities](#), Jordan
- [GJU, German Jordanian University](#), Jordan
- [PSUT, Princess Sumaya University for Technology](#), Jordan

Associate Partner

- [EDEN, European Distance and E-Learning Network](#), UK

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