



OPENING UP EDUCATION  
IN SOUTH-MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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Coventry  
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## Recommendations from OpenMed to University leaders and policy makers for opening up Higher Education in the South-Mediterranean by 2030



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## Background

The [OpenMed project](#), supported by the [Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education programme](#) of the European Union, has been working during the period 2015-2018 to widening participation and adoption of **Open Educational Resources (OER)** and Open Educational Practices (OEP) as a bottom-up approach to support the modernisation of the Higher Education sector in the South-Mediterranean.

The project involved an international consortium coordinated by UNIMED (Italy) with: Politecnico di Torino (Italy), Universidad Internacional de La Rioja (Spain), University of Seville (Spain), Coventry University (UK), Cairo University (Egypt), Alexandria University (Egypt), Cadi Ayyad University (Morocco), Université Ibn Zohr (Morocco), Birzeit University (Palestine), An-Najah National University (Palestine), AArU - Association of Arab Universities (Jordan), German Jordanian University (Jordan), and Princess Sumaya University for Technology (Jordan).

### Why OpenMed

The rationale for initiating OpenMed, is that in the Arab Mediterranean countries the demand for Higher Education often exceeds capacity of the HE systems, and therefore the use of OER and OEP are possible ways to expand access to learning opportunities, thus promoting equity, inclusion and democratisation of Higher Education. Widening participation to Higher Education by means of OER adoption is indeed a strategic priority for the higher education sector in general and for the OER movement.

### Overall Impact

OpenMed raised awareness and facilitated the adoption of Open Educational Resources (OER) and Open Educational Practices (OEP) in the South-Mediterranean countries, with a particular focus on higher education in **Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Palestine**.

### Project Highlights and Achievements

OpenMed has contributed substantially to place open education on the regional educational agenda, by working with partner institutions and the open education movement worldwide.

OpenMed has been working at three different but connected levels:

- **policy level**, addressing policy development through national dialogues with a wide range of stakeholders, and through setting multi-country strategic actions on the basis of such dialogues, aimed at maximising the benefits of Open Education to increase the access, the quality and the equity of Higher Education in the region;
- **institutional level**, creating innovation Centers for Open Education at the premises of each partner university, and facilitating the development of institutional roadmaps and action plans for the implementation of open education at local and institutional levels;
- **educators level**, building and strengthening educators' capacities to incorporate OER and OEP into their daily teaching in order to bring learning processes and their outcomes closer to learners' needs.

Main highlights and achievements over the 3-year period include:

- [Compendium](#) publication and executive summaries in English, French, and Arabic with a review of Open Education globally and in particular the South-Mediterranean region, contextual information on countries and partners, webometric analysis, 11 case studies and a series of [video interviews](#) with experts in open education;
- [OER National Strategy Forums](#) conducted in [Egypt](#) (November 2016), [Morocco](#) (December 2016), [Jordan](#) (February 2017), and [Palestine](#) (April 2017);
- [OER Regional Agenda](#) for the South-Mediterranean Universities, as starting point for the development of both action plans and roadmaps at institutional level;
- Institutional Roadmaps on Open Education, and a [national declaration about Open Education in Morocco](#);
- [Innovation Centers for Open Education](#) at eight South-Mediterranean partner universities where technical and networking infrastructure is available to university students, teachers and staff;
- 74 [academics trained](#) face to face ([Torino, 25-29 Sep-18](#)) and online phase ([Oct-17 Mar-18](#)) to adopt Open Education approaches, run through nine [learning circles](#) in Egypt, Morocco, Palestine, Jordan, and Lebanon facilitated by a network of 15 local facilitators, including a [webinar series](#) on different aspects of Open Education with international leaders in the field, and a variety of OER-related [projects](#) created by participants in the course;
- [OER Course](#) on “Open Education: fundamentals and approaches” composed by 5 modules, activities and project works steps, openly available in multiple languages (English, French, Arabic) and formats;
- A [set of recommendations](#) to institutional leaders and policy makers to strategically prioritise Open Education to further develop the education system in the South-Mediterranean;
- An active network of global experts and educators interested in promoting open education.

# Recommendations to Institutional Leaders

Higher Education Institutions aiming at embracing the values of Open Education will require of leaders able to steer the profound changes necessary at managerial, educational and cultural levels. Based on our work within the OpenMed project, **we call for institutional leaders to strategically prioritise Open Education to further develop the education system in the South-Mediterranean**, and we provide university leaders and policy makers with the following recommendations.

## 1. Support democratic and diverse access to knowledge

Open Education is about **human rights and access to learning for the benefit of all**, and fostering a culture of developing knowledge, and of ‘knowing’ and sharing, to foster mutual understanding across cultures and groups, promoting democratic values, transparency, equity, and social participation.

Institutional leaders should further promote democratic and diverse access to knowledge by:

- Fostering a transition towards Open Education through the adoption of **Open Licenses**, ensuring that all educational materials produced by public institutions and developed with public funds are openly available for reuse, adaptation, and localisation of OER in national languages and in diverse cultural contexts;
- Encouraging the contribution of high quality **OER in Arabic** as part of global and locally relevant content to complement what currently exists online worldwide, and to ensure culturally-relevant OER are accessible to Arabic-only speakers;
- Ensuring equitable access to **Open Platforms and software** to foster the adoption and production of OER, bridging the digital divide by developing digital skills, digital culture, and digital and information literacy through an efficient infrastructure, including affordable broadband connectivity and widespread mobile technology;
- Developing **Open Education institutional policies**, fostering strategies to formally recognise Open Education efforts and enabling broad use and adaptation of OER;
- Lobby for changes in **national policy** in support of open, high quality, participatory education for all learners;
- Reaching out to local communities, identifying knowledge needs and skills gaps, and developing open educational initiatives that **go beyond the creation on open content** in order to build capacity among long-life learners.

## 2. Build Capacities in Open Education

Open Education can be transformative at academic level, as when a critical mass of impactful activities are visible, a long lasting cultural change can occur within the institutions involved, enhancing institutional recognition and reputation. Such changes at the institutional level can then have an impact at national and international levels.

Educational leaders should support educators in strengthening their capacities by:

- **Raising awareness** about the benefits of OER, disseminating information and offering training on the OER and Open Education, expanding the base of teachers participating in open practices;
- Promoting the creation, and use of high quality OER, and **supporting open pedagogical approaches** including teaching and learning aspects and links to social learning, through constructive learning with peers;
- Providing assessed and certified continuous professional development opportunities, **incorporating openness in educators training programmes** (in-service and pre-service) enhancing capacity on the use and value of OER to develop technical skills and competences to create, find, use, remix, and contribute to OER, as well as engaging with the wider learning community to develop and promote OER;
- Fostering capacity development by reusing, **adapting and delivering the OpenMed Course**, and formally recognise this Course as a mean to develop the capacity of all key education stakeholders;

Incorporating open education as part of the development of capacities for managerial staff at universities, promoting of Open Education to the adaptation of universities to more uncertain and changing environments.

## 3. Instill a Culture of Openness by rewarding Open Education

Open Education is not limited to enabling access to knowledge in the form of OERs, but it represents a culture of openness, transparency, trust and collaboration within and outside institutions.

Institutions should break barriers embracing a culture of openness by:

- **Offering recognition, reward and incentives** (e.g. via promotion, awards, reassigned time) to those who have included aspects of Open Education into their teaching, to ensure the sustainability of Open Education initiatives;
- **Incentivising career progression** of teachers and researchers who include aspects of Open Education in their practices;

- Incorporating the participation in MOOCs, OER, Open Education in the formal systems of teachers' recognition and accreditation;
- **Fostering collaboration between educators and students to co-create course material** and resources, opening up the classrooms to new forms of learning by rewarding these practices with credits for students;
- **Recognising and accrediting knowledge acquired through OER and OEP** by creating adequate mechanisms to assess learners' competences, and pursuing academic quality assurance and rigour in the process of OER production and adoption;
- **Foster international and inter-institutional cooperation** between education stakeholders to maximise educational investments and to develop a global pool of culturally diverse, locally relevant, gender-sensitive, accessible, and open educational materials in multiple languages and formats;
- Using Open Education as a mean to **raise the profile of the university** at national and international levels.

## 4. Direct human and economic resources towards Open Education initiatives

Openness in Higher Education can stimulate the supply and demand for high-quality OERs which are essential for modernising education. If universities want to find more resources to invest in better teaching and research, it is essential that the sharing of open resources is encouraged. Knowledge must be shared and spread, teachers encouraged to network and collaborate on course development.

University leaders should direct human capitals and resources for the development of Open Education initiatives by:

- **Ensuring funds for the development of capacity building programmes** in Open Education to create a sustainable model of Open Educational Practices;
- Providing the **technical and human support** needed for practitioners to adopt an innovative way of designing and delivering education, towards achieving the goals of quality and diversity in learning;
- Promoting the adoption of **Open Platforms and Open Source Software** to foster the use and creation of OER;
- Investing in the development of **OERs and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)** through the reuse of content already available within institutions to showcase excellent practices at a teaching level.



## Country-specific recommendations

### Egypt

#### *National context:*

In Egypt each university has its own platform, and their online programmes often emulate the traditional way of teaching and learning. National policies promote alternative approaches (e-learning and blended learning) which will make learning available without boundaries. The National Authority of Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Education is giving priority to the definition of Quality Assurance mechanisms to ensure the quality of Open Education, and the Ministry of Higher Education and the Supreme Council of Universities are playing an important role to enhance the adoption of open/distance education.

Higher Education in Egypt faces a major challenge due to a high demand of students willing to access university courses. In this context, quality Open Education could play an important role in providing open courses, which could be accessible by a high number of students.

Within the national context, we encourage policy makers to further develop Open Education by:

- Ensuring that a proportion of the content produced by Egyptian universities for the delivery of blended learning courses is released under some open licence that “permits no-cost access, use, adaptation and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions” ([2012 UNESCO OER Paris Declaration](#)). In particular, we suggest the adoption of Creative Commons licences which are compatible with the definition of Open Educational Resources (OER).
- Contribute with more Arabic language and locally relevant content to what currently exists online worldwide, as Arabic content is not that always on high quality, and also, because content in other languages is not accessible in Arabic speakers and as these may be culturally irrelevant.
- Facilitate the reuse of content by other universities in Egypt and other Arab countries, providing learners and teachers in disadvantaged areas with an opportunity to access and adapt high quality and up-to-date academic content.
- Enhance the visibility and reputation of academics participating in the initiative and Egyptian universities at large.
- Raise awareness on OER and OEP amongst educators, managers and policy makers in Egyptian universities and beyond.
- Provide a policy message that Egypt is committed to increase access to educational opportunities, to achieve a knowledgeable society for all.

## Morocco

### *National context:*

In Morocco, there is a significant critical mass of OE initiatives and the country could play a leading role in the development of this field of practice in the South Mediterranean and, more broadly, the Francophone Africa.

To face the massification of Higher Education (HE) and to encourage production of quality online learning, a national Moroccan platform has been created for all HE institutions: The MUN (Maroc Université Numérique), is an OpenEdx based platform which will centralise content, providing services to every HE institutions. There are also several other projects in this field in Morocco, mainly aimed at addressing the massification of HE. However, better cohesion and coordination between universities is crucial to ensure the widespread of the OE principles of OE more furtherly, and to foster engagement between initiatives, but moreover, as a way to prevent the duplication of efforts, as for example, when institutions are producing MOOCs.

Within the national context, and based on the principles of the “Déclaration du Maroc sur les Ressources Educatives Libres-OER Morocco Declaration”, we encourage policy makers to further develop Open Education by:

- Fostering awareness of all forms of open education across all sectors of Moroccan education, promoting Open Education Practices and the use of Open Educational Resources to widen access to lifelong learning at all levels;
- Encouraging the use of open licenses (e.g. Creative Commons) for all educational materials produced with public funds, enabling different kinds of use, while respecting the rights of copyright holders;
- Encouraging the development and adaptation of Open Education Resources in a variety of local languages and diverse cultural contexts to ensure their relevance and accessibility;
- Supporting the development of user-friendly ICT tools to find, retrieve and share Open Education Resources that are relevant to the needs of teachers and learners, based on open standards to ensure interoperability and reuse of open courses, resources and assessment materials;
- Reinforcing the development of institutional strategies for Open Educational Resources and open online courses, including rewarding and incentives schemes for the staff adopting Open Education Practices;
- Supporting capacity building on Open Education through adequately funded professional development programmes for teachers and other key personnel, which take into account local needs and the full diversity of learners;
- Fostering strategic Open Education alliances at national and international level, creating opportunities for sharing openly licensed courses and materials, and ensuring sustainability across all sectors and levels;

- Encouraging and fund research on Open Education, in order to strengthen the evidence base for public investment in Open Education in general and Open Educational Resources in particular;
- Supporting the Open Education community in Morocco, by organising an annual event where Open Education practitioners and researchers can present their work and share expertise and by promoting the participation of Open Education practitioners and researchers from Morocco at relevant international academic events so their work can gain more visibility.

## Jordan

### *National context:*

In Jordan, there is a clear intention of widening the spectrum of opportunities that can ensure that Open Education becomes widely adopted in Higher Education, as they are already developing OER and open courses especially in collaboration with Edraak, The National Open and Innovative Education Center, and local e-Learning centers at Jordanian universities. In addition, there is a plan to facilitate the design and uptake of OER and to provide disadvantaged groups and refugees with an open access to the educational system.

Within the national context, we encourage policy makers to further develop Open Education by:

- Providing continuous support of Open Education culture by designing and implementing a curriculum about OER for students at universities. In addition, to encourage schools to adopt this curriculum;
- Formulate a research consortium among Jordanian and EU universities to better enhance the usage of OER and update the knowledge with new tech trends;
- Conduct training sessions and systematic, periodic workshops, to reinforce the skills and abilities of instructors in using OER in different majors and fields;
- Planning dissemination events targeted to Jordanian faculty members, students, colleagues and decision-makers at each university, aimed at sharing the results of the project and the roadmap for Open Education within each institution.

## Palestine

### *National context:*

The potential impact of Open Education in Palestine is extensive, not only because of the lack of possibilities of internationalising their HE system due to living under occupation, resulting in a restricted access for students from Gaza to attend West Bank Universities, for international students and academics to attend Palestinian Universities, but also, because of the rather limited means to access industrial, technological and natural resources. Moreover, because the Palestinian economy is a captive one, there is a lack of resources for research and for teaching, therefore, Openness and Open Education are essential to Palestine at a philosophical and ethical level.

We encourage national policy makers to further develop Open Education by:

- Moving the article in Education Law from policy statement to procedure action;
- Consider accepting online degrees and start to formally accredit whole online academic programs;
- Encourage universities to produce more Open Educational Resources in Arabic;
- Capacity building on OER among all universities in Palestine;
- Support research in OER and encourage publication in this topic especially sharing best practices.

## Conclusions and Steps Forward

The general conclusion of the OpenMed work is that **benefits of Open Education are widespread**, as is the reason for the demand, and for strategically prioritise Open Education to further enhance the education system in the South-Mediterranean, for the following reasons:

Open Education has the potential to **expand the role and impact of Higher Education in the society**, fostering and democratising access to education and localising learning materials in line with the needs of local contexts;

- By using OER, educators and learners can collaborate on compiling course material and resources, opening up the classrooms to **new forms of learning**;
- Open Education can improve Higher Education, making it more accessible, relevant and inclusive in the global knowledge-sharing society;
- Open Education can be transformative at academic level, as it can have an impact at national and international level, **enhancing institutional recognition** and reputation;
- Open Education has the potential to help students to **improve the quality of learning**, for example, learners can access and work through OER at their own pace, and share understandings with a wider community of learners, widening classroom learning spaces, benefiting those studying in overcrowded classes and furthermore, those struggling to attend classes, or to reach campus, including disadvantaged students.

Favouring a bottom-up alongside with a top-down approach and by including university governance bodies, OpenMed has proved that it is possible to better integrate Mediterranean university systems into a global academic and scientific cooperation network, which is an essential factor for the integration of Mediterranean communities and economies.

Open Education in the South Mediterranean can be achieved if all stakeholders act together, therefore. The OpenMed partners and colleagues aim at continue advocating for action to support openness in education in the South-Mediterranean through:

- Widening participation and building capacity in Open Education beyond the end of our project participants, granting open access to the OpenMed course in multiple languages (English, French, and Arabic) and formats and for different purposes;
- Sharing all our project-related publications and data openly, to foster further research in Open Education;
- Working through a SubNetwork in Open Education and eLearning within the UNIMED Network, for the sharing of best practices, fostering collaboration and for ensuring regular dialogue with relevant stakeholders.





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