

# A Review of Open Educational Practices and Resources – OLCOS Roadmap 2012

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*Reviewed by Ildikó Mázár,  
European Distance and E-Learning Network*

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## Executive Summary

As a Transversal Action under the European eLearning Programme, the Open e-Learning Content Observatory Services (OLCOS) project carries out a set of activities that aim at fostering the creation, sharing and re-use of Open Educational Resources (OER) in Europe and beyond.

OER are understood to comprise content for teaching and learning, software-based tools and services, and licenses that allow for open development and re-use of content, tools and services.

The OLCOS road mapping work was conducted to provide decision makers with an overview of current and likely future developments in OER and recommendations on how various challenges in OER could be addressed.

While the results of the road mapping provide some basis for policy and institutional planning, strategic leadership and decision making is needed for implementing measures that are likely to promote a further uptake of open educational practices and resources.

OER are understood to be an important element of policies that want to leverage education and lifelong learning for the knowledge economy and society. However, OLCOS emphasises that it is crucial to also promote innovation and change in educational practices.

In particular, OLCOS warns that delivering OER to the still dominant model of teachercentred knowledge transfer will have little effect on equipping teachers, students and workers with the competences, knowledge and skills to participate successfully in the knowledge economy and society.

The OLCOS Roadmap emphasises the need to foster open practices of teaching and learning that are informed by a competency-based educational framework. However, it is understood that a shift towards such practices will only happen in the longer term in a step-by-step process. Bringing about this shift will require targeted and sustained efforts by educational leaders at all levels.

The road mapping work covers the following areas:

- Policies, institutional frameworks and business models;
- Open Access and open content repositories;
- Laboratories of open educational practices and resources.

For each of these areas, drivers/enablers and inhibitors of OER and open educational practices are identified and described in detail. The results are summarised in Roadmap Briefs, which may be used as starting points for discussing initiatives in OER and open educational practices on a strategic level.

Among the critical **inhibitors** that have been identified the following three should receive particular attention:

- In order to see researchers and educators excel in OER, academic and educational institutions will need to implement appropriate mechanisms of recognition and reward.
- Business models in OER will remain tricky. The right mix of income streams must be found, and there will be growing competition for scarce funding resources.
- Regarding educational repositories at present there exists little experience in how to effectively support communities of practice, which is of critical importance if OER initiatives want to grow based on user contributions.

With respect to potential **drivers/enablers**, the following three are among those of general importance:

- The urgency of the lifelong learning agenda in Europe and beyond makes OER initiatives targeted at driving participation particularly welcome.
- Whereas current OER initiatives focus mainly on providing access to static course material, a new generation of easy-to-use Web-based tools and services provides opportunities to offer potentially more effective OER.
- For authors and institutions who wish to provide OER while retaining some copyrights, the set of Creative Commons licenses allows for doing so in an internationally standardised way.

However, these points are only a limited selection of observations from OLCOS' much broader assessment of issues and developments in OER and open educational practices.

Based on the road mapping results the OLCOS report provides a more comprehensive set of recommendations for the following decision makers and stakeholders:

- Educational policy makers and funding bodies;
- Boards, directors and supervisors of educational institutions;
- Teachers;
- Students;
- Educational repositories;
- Developers and implementers of e-learning tools and environments.

The OLCOS Project Consortium invites decision makers and stakeholders in OER to consult the project website for further information on ongoing activities and other products.

They welcome comments and suggestions on their products as well as the opportunity to establish cooperation with other ongoing projects and new initiatives in OER and open educational practices.