



**OPEN
EDUCATIONAL
RESOURCES**



CONCEPT NOTE

3rd UNESCO World OER Congress

**Digital Public Goods:
Open Solutions and AI for Inclusive
Access to Knowledge**

Introduction

UNESCO and its partners are organizing the 3rd UNESCO World Open Educational Resources (OER) Congress 'Digital Public Goods: Open Solutions and AI for Inclusive Access to Knowledge' to examine mechanisms for optimizing openly licensed content to address the challenges and opportunities posed by emerging technologies. The 3rd UNESCO World OER Congress will take place in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (U.A.E) on 19-20 November 2024.

[The UNESCO 2019 Recommendation on OER](#), addresses practitioners and decision makers in governmental and institutional settings and encourages knowledge sharing, capacity building and policy support related to digital public goods for learning. It outlines recommendations to Member State in 5 areas of action (i) building capacity of stakeholders to create, access, re-use, adapt and redistribute OER; (ii) developing supportive policy; (iii) encouraging inclusive and equitable quality OER; (iv) nurturing the creation of sustainability models for OER, and (v) facilitating international cooperation.

This 3rd UNESCO World OER Congress will make a contribution to the Global Digital Compact by putting forward targeted actions for promoting digital commons as a public good, drawing on the implementation of the UNESCO 2019 Recommendation on OER. It will also provide input to the 2025 review process of the World Summit on the information Society (WSIS) where the UNESCO 2019 Recommendation on OER contributes to Action Line 3 "promoting public access to information, and public domain information".

UNESCO conducted the first consolidated report on the implementation of the 2019 Recommendation on OER in 2023. The report points to a timely and innovative normative instrument that facilitates responding to global challenges such as the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as a tool to stimulate reflection on the role of open knowledge with the onset of the increased use of generative Artificial Intelligence. The 3rd UNESCO World OER Congress 2024 will draw on the findings of the consolidated report and identify strategies for supporting the implementation of the UNESCO 2019 Recommendation on OER to meet emerging challenges.

The 3rd World OER Congress will draw on the expertise and participation of the OER Dynamic Coalition, an official Internet Governance Forum (IGF) Dynamic Coalition. The OER Dynamic Coalition fosters collaboration and knowledge sharing amongst stakeholders on the implementation of the UNESCO 2019 Recommendation on OER. The IGF Dynamic Coalition status allows for enriched multistakeholder deliberations on the implementation of the UNESCO 2019 Recommendation on OER within a wider intergovernmental framework¹.

It will further draw on expertise from UNESCO's Intergovernmental 'Information for All Programme (IFAP)' that supports Member States in fostering equitable societies through promoting universal access to information and knowledge for sustainable development. It will draw on national assessment reports of the R.O.A.M. principles (Human Rights, Openness, Accessibility, Multi-stakeholder participation) which acknowledge the importance of open solutions such as OER.

By mobilizing collaborative mechanisms and Member States through their educational community, cultural institutions such as libraries and museums, media and technology community for this important event, the implementation of the UNESCO 2019 Recommendation on OER will further contribute towards expanding access to quality, innovative, accessible openly licensed educational resources.

¹The UNESCO OER Dynamic Coalition is incorporated in the Organization's contribution to the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) through the integration of the UNESCO OER Dynamic Coalition, as an official Dynamic Coalition of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) – a global multistakeholder platform established by the UN Secretary General to facilitate the discussion of public policy issues pertaining to the Internet.

Objectives of the 3rd World OER Congress

The 3rd UNESCO World OER Congress '*Digital Public Goods: Open Solutions and AI for Inclusive Access to Knowledge*' will identify how the implementation of this UN Normative instrument can effectively contribute to [United Nation's Secretary General's Road Map for Digital Cooperation](#), Commitment 7 of 'Our Common Agenda': to "Improve of digital cooperation" and contribute to the Global Digital Compact.

In this regard, UNESCO and its partners will hold the 3rd UNESCO World OER Congress to:

- 1 Share best practices and innovations in the implementation of the UNESCO 2019 Recommendation on OER in the first five years since its adoption;
- 2 Identify strategies for supporting the implementation of the UNESCO 2019 Recommendation on OER to meet emerging challenges;
- 3 Identify collaborative mechanisms to mobilize more stakeholders to implement the UNESCO 2019 Recommendation on OER with a view to expand access to quality, free accessible openly licensed learning resources in support of the Global Digital Compact and the Transforming Education Summit 2023 Call for Action.

The expected outcome of this event will be Guidelines on how the UNESCO 2019 Recommendation on OER can optimize openly licensed content to address the challenges and opportunities posed by emerging technologies.

The discussions will build on the outcomes of the 1st World OER Congress (UNESCO HQs, Paris 2012), which aimed to advance the principle and practice of open access to publicly funded resources and the 2nd World OER Congress (Ljubljana, Slovenia, 2017) that produced the Ljubljana OER Action Plan which charted the basis of the UNESCO 2019 Recommendation on OER. It will also take into account the finding of the first consolidated report on the first five years of implementation of the UNESCO 2019 Recommendation on OER, in which 79 UNESCO Member States responded and unanimously underscored the widespread global adoption of OER and highlighted the transformative value of sharing knowledge through openly licensed content.

Key Themes

The responses of Member States to the first consolidated report on the implementation of the UNESCO 2019 Recommendation on OER, held in 2023, demonstrated the strength and receptiveness of the normative instrument to respond to challenges and opportunities which have occurred since its adoption in 2019. For this reason, the main focus of the discussions at the 3rd World OER Congress will be on *Open solutions and Generative Artificial Intelligence and OER*.

Open Solutions

Openness has become a powerful principle to promote access and creation of knowledge and information worldwide. Open solutions, which are digital public goods² available on an open copyright

² *Digital Public Goods*: A digital public good is defined by the UN Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation, as: "open-source software, open data, open AI models, open standards and open content that adhere to privacy and other applicable laws and best practices, do no harm, and help attain the SDGs."

license³, have become essential in a variety of areas, including learning (open educational resources), software (free and open-source software), science (open access), and government (open data). Open solutions, due to their intellectual property regime, allow flexibility, scalability, and interoperability to promote knowledge sharing and access to information⁴. During the 3rd UNESCO World OER Congress will explore the important legal and technical aspects of open licensing but also how openness encourages changes to policies, strategies and practices, particularly by actors in the public sphere.

Particular attention will also be given to policy dialogue initiatives, knowledge sharing and capacity building initiatives, including for those in vulnerable communities. Consideration will also be given to the economic value of open solutions and strategies on how it can reduce costs. Open solutions are “critical to addressing inequalities and bridging the technology, innovation and knowledge divides”.

Generative AI and OER

The accelerated adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) services and tools, has fostered significant debates around how information is created, shared, used and reused. In law, there have been intensive debates around the status of creative works generated through AI⁴, the legality of using both copyrighted and open content to train AI models, and also challenges the relevance of open licenses. Moreover, in education, new forms of content creation challenge the role of traditional assessment and have ignited new debates on bias and equity. In science, it has led to concerns regarding to research integrity, authorship and attribution, as well as privacy and information forgery. These challenges are universal, and directly affect the production and exchange of information and knowledge.

The 3rd UNESCO World OER Congress will reflect on the private and public sector’s role in advancing and promoting the use of AI tools, in many cases without due care for fundamental human rights such as privacy and equity. During the 3rd UNESCO World OER Congress, discussions will focus on how openly licensed content for learning can harness frontier technologies such as generative AI while ensuring that the respect of the R.O.A.M principles of Human Rights, Openness, Accessibility, and Multi-stakeholder participation. Issues for discussion include implications of generative AI on the five areas of action the UNESCO 2019 Recommendation on OER.

³ *Open Copyright Licenses*: Open licenses are licenses that respect the intellectual property rights of the copyright owner and provides permissions granting the public the rights to access, reuse, re-purpose, adapt and redistribute information materials³. The types of open licenses used vary on the open solution. The most common open license used is Creative Commons (CC).

⁴ WSIS Action Line 3⁴ which promotes public access to information, and public domain information.