



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION,
SCIENCE AND SPORT



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



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“Opening up Member States: Openingup*Balkans* as regional pilot for Openness”

Background Document

Organizers:

- Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, Government of the Republic of Slovenia
- UNESCO Chair on Open Technologies for Open Educational Resources and Open Learning, Institut Jožef Stefan
- Knowledge 4 All Foundation Ltd.

Authors:

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Summary:

The following is an invitation to start the Openingup*Balkans* initiative at a satellite event during the 2nd World Congress on Open Educational Resources in Ljubljana, Slovenia on 19th September 2017.

The Government of the Republic of Slovenia would like to take advantage of the momentum it has created with its activities in Open Education on both national and international levels and align all main policy making bodies in the Western Balkans region into an Openingup*Balkans* initiative. This follows the idea of “Connecting and Opening up all Member States”.

This new initiative will introduce the European agenda for Open Education¹, including all aspects of Openness such as Open Access, Open Educational Resources, Open Data, etc., into the Western Balkans with the purpose of maximizing the educational potential in the Region.

Learning should no longer be solely confined to classrooms and timetables, but must take full advantage of technology and innovation to break boundaries and transfer knowledge across Western Balkans cultures, generations, and geographical borders. The event will present an idea of first steps towards mainstreaming Openness in the region.

¹ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions Opening up Education: Innovative teaching and learning for all through new Technologies and Open Educational Resources <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52013DC0654>

2nd World OER Congress

In 2012, the 1st World Congress on Open Educational Resources was held in Paris. Its impact was powerful and had high relevance as the conference was attended by 400 delegates from governments and experts worldwide. The Paris Declaration was adopted at that occasion and has been used as a basis for developing OER activities in many countries and is today the driving force of awareness raising for OER policies all over the world.

From 18 - 20 September 2017, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, Government of the Republic of Slovenia will organize together with UNESCO the "2nd World Congress on Open Educational Resources"² and are inviting other countries and stakeholders to collaborate, explore and exchange good practices, and lead in the global digital transformation of education, development and stakeholders partnerships. The Congress will be organized in close collaboration with the Commonwealth of Learning, Creative Commons, the European Commission, UNESCO Chairs in OER, the Knowledge 4 All Foundation, and with the financial contribution of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

The theme of the Congress is *OER for Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education: From Commitment to Action*. The outcome of the Congress will be for governments to create or renew OER policy and to identify concrete actions that would be implemented within a specific time frame.

Since the 1st World OER Congress (2012), two significant developments have taken place:

- The world has advanced from the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with a distinct goal on education (Goal 4) which aims to ensure *“inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. As Member States review their education policies and strategies, this would be an appropriate time to integrate the role of OER in achieving the targets by 2030. Moreover, the Incheon Declaration with sets targets for goal 4, lists as target 4.3...” a tertiary education system, supported by technology, open educational resources and distance education can increase access, equity, quality and relevance.”*
- Member States noted the Paris Declaration, some began to integrate OER into their education systems. Many activities, resources, platforms and services were developed. However, such actions are not yet widespread and this commitment has not always been fully implemented.

These two key issues determine the overall theme of the 2nd World OER Congress and the 6 Regional Consultations that preceded it. While the 1st World OER Congress focused on advocacy and awareness- raising, the 2nd World OER Congress will emphasise the transition from commitment to action. Participating countries will be invited to make a commitment to adopt OER at the policy level and to identify concrete actions which could be implemented within a specific time frame.

Satellite events: In order to seize the moment and maximize the impact, we have created a set of thematically connected and focused events which will accompany the main sessions of the Congress. These will aim at building awareness among representatives from Academia and Industry that they can make a valuable contribution to the goals set by UNESCO.

² 2nd World Congress on OER website <http://www.oercongress.org/>

“Opening up Member States: Opening up *Balkans* as regional pilot for Openness in Education”

List of invited Ministers:

- Croatia: Blaženka Divjak, Minister of Science and Education
- Serbia: Mladen Šarčević, Minister of Education, Science and Technological Development
- Albania: Mirela Karabina, Minister of Education and Sports
- Bosnia and Herzegovina: Elvira Dilberović, Federal Minister of Education and Science
- Macedonia: Renata Treneska Deskoska, Minister of Education and Science
- Montenegro: Damir Šehović, Minister of Education and Sports

Expected results: The event will result in a shared standpoint, a “*Roadmap for Opening up Western Balkans*”, and a definition of a first pilot project proposed by Slovenia. We will showcase an implementation charter for Openness as a driver for innovation, stability and economic and educational boost with the potential for reskilling and job creation. The Government of the Republic of Slovenia has a strong agenda in open education, open learning environments, OER and skills creation. It will make sure to disseminate the idea of “Opening up Member States” to all governments in Western Balkans and South Eastern Europe, including the 195 UNESCO Member States and 52 Members of the Commonwealth of Learning.

Proposed Ministerial meeting agenda:

Monday 18 September 2017		
	Congress track	Opening up Balkans satellite
14:30 – 16:00		Top-down: Ministerial panel on “Vision and proposals for Opening up the Balkans” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representatives of the Governments of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia
16:00 – 16:30	Coffee Break	
16:30 – 18:00		Bottom-up: Stakeholders panel on Open Education from Research, Academia and Civil Society <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researchers from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia Group discussion: Partnerships and alliances in the region (good practices and further activities) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governments, Researchers, Technologists, Civil society
Tuesday 19 September 2017		
8:15 – 9:15		Ministerial Working Breakfast Top-down: “Vision and proposals for Opening up the Western Balkans” Representatives of the Governments of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia

Ministerial meeting description: The Government of the Republic of Slovenia will organise a mini-conference featuring presentations by Ministers on “Vision and proposals for Opening up the Western Balkans”, experts as well as both academia and industry from the region on “Partnerships and alliances in the region”. This document will propose an initial set of agreeable standpoints and initial projects for these presentations. As stated above, there are a number of bottom-up actions and a portfolio of top-down political attempts to bring the region together. Therefore, Slovenia proposes that the Western Balkan region be the first EU region to actively and comprehensively adopt the European Commission's Opening up Education communication, UNESCO's Paris OER Declaration³, the results of the 2nd World Congress on Open Educational Resources and, most importantly, the blueprint of the national OpeningupSlovenia initiative, enabling the implementation of the idea of “Opening up Member States”.

Background: In October 2013 the European Commission published a policy document asking Member States to consider adopting Open Education as a strategy for building bridges across all stakeholders involved in education⁴. In 2014, Slovenia decided to implement the document and become the first EU Member State to fully embrace open education. It did so by creating a top-down and bottom-up initiative called OpeningupSlovenia⁵, an attempt to create a blueprint for countries in the region and around the world to adopt the openness approach, by developing, deploying, testing, evaluating and sharing good practices in open education with everyone.

Rationale: Recent years have witnessed ground-breaking developments in the field of education and training. Society is becoming increasingly complex; and as great amounts of information are generated, the traditional education systems have difficulty in keeping up with these trends. Knowledge is becoming available to all, everywhere, at all times. Education is thus becoming increasingly "open" and connected with other areas of state and society. Open education is an upgrade of the existing system, and builds on traditional education with a greater degree of flexibility. It includes everything from technology, content and methods to legal aspects and motivational elements. Only a comprehensive approach can lead to necessary qualitative changes. Slovenia offers a unique example of such an approach to the global world.

Opportunity: Johannes Hahn, the European Union's commissioner for enlargement, says that EU governments have been pushing him for ideas on how to keep the Western Balkans region stable. The result is an implementation plan for a Western Balkans common market, backed both by local leaders and by the EU itself. Commissioner Hahn says the plan could create up to 80,000 jobs. Foreign investors will see a market of 20 million people rather than six small countries. In fact, much of what Mr Hahn wants to do is already under way. An incomplete free-trade area exists. There is a Western Balkans energy community linked to the EU, a treaty integrating transport policy is ready to be signed, the mutual recognition of professional qualifications and intercultural dialogue, including a common agreement for the digital transformation of the six governments. The idea now is to build on all these activities and fill in the gaps by using Openness, beginning in the field of education.

Developments and key events:

- **Sarajevo, January 2015, “1st OpeningupSlovenia workshop in Bosnia-Herzegovina”.** This was the first attempt on presenting and directly influencing a new “Opening up Member States” initiative which is one of the goals of OpeningupSlovenia. The workshop was held at the Ministry of Education and

³ The 2012 [Paris OER Declaration](#) was formally adopted at the 2012 World Open Educational Resources (OER) Congress held at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris from 20 – 22 June 2012.

⁴ Communication Opening up Education: Innovative teaching and learning for all through new Technologies and Open Educational Resources <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52013DC0654>

⁵ OpeningupSlovenia website <http://www.ouslovenia.net/event/ioe2015/>

Science, Canton Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina. Good practices were exchanged between Slovenia and Bosnia-Herzegovina on the topic of open learning environments, open educational resources and new education technologies.

- **Sarajevo, September 2015, “2nd Internet of Education Conference 2015”.** This was a successful attempt, bringing together researchers and policymakers from all Western Balkans countries to present the region’s achievements in methods for improving the effectiveness of online and open education and new EduTech trends for traditional university education, especially in the South-East European region.
- **Bled Strategic Forum 2016, September 2016.** Ministerial meeting on digital transformation. The ministers and government representatives of Slovenia, Croatia, and the Western Balkans region, as well as representatives of the Chambers of Commerce of the above-mentioned countries came together for the first time in order to discuss the chosen topic: “Digital Transformation in the Region of Western Balkans”⁶. The subjects of the discussion were the various opportunities available for the acceleration of digital transformation and strengthening of regional cooperation in the Western Balkans.
- **Sarajevo, March 2017, Ministerial Summit** - Prime ministers of the five Balkan countries that want to join the EU seized the moment. The European Council reaffirmed its unequivocal support for the European perspective of the Western Balkans and stressed that the EU remains committed to the region and engaged at all levels, to support stability and to deepen political and economic ties with and within the region. This firm and credible perspective, thus, continues to drive the transformation and modernisation through political and economic reforms.
- **Trieste, July 2017, Ministerial Summit** – EU wants the five countries to sign up to a plan for a regional common market, with free trade, free circulation of labour and capital, and regulatory standardisation.

Organizers:

- **Top-down perspective:** Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, Government of the Republic of Slovenia (MIZS) as the main organiser of the “Opening up Balkans”, the main policy maker for education in Slovenia and member of OpeningupSlovenia.
- **Bottom-up perspective:** OpeningupSlovenia members from education, technology and business and Knowledge 4 All Foundation Ltd, interested in advanced technologies in Open Education.

1st OpeningupBalkans pilot project: The Government of the Republic of Slovenia has identified a first value project to be presented at the meeting - a collaboration on exchange of educational and other data essential for starting the Openness agenda and build prosperity of citizens of the Western Balkans Region (Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia). The project (Annex I) addresses the essential challenge of research and innovation in the knowledge economy that lies in the knowledge/technology transfer from R&D to the commercial world. The operation of this innovation value chain is not well-developed in Europe, and particularly underdeveloped in Western Balkans (and South-East Europe). The Future Region’s Single Digital Initiative⁷ brings countries together to share data and information that can predict future (educational, technological, business, etc.) trends. This, in turn, will enable the regional economy to map its competencies and skills and become more competitive and provide a background based on the open information system to encourage a “transnational innovation system” for Western Balkans. This idea is about integrating existing educational, research and innovation data in the region to provide open and unique science and research analytics services to researchers, businesses, policy makers and general public. The intention is to

⁶ http://www.mju.gov.si/en/media_room/news/archive/2016/9/select/sporocilo_za_javnost/article/12447/7616/

⁷ As signed by Chambers of economy in presence of relevant Ministries of countries forming the Future Region at occasion of Bled Strategic Forum, 2016

create the first step to a fully running service based on the existing data from Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia and existing analytics environment built in Slovenia⁸. In the next step, the other five countries from the region will be involved. The project is essentially a data driven one, but with its result it creates a baseline for an open education platform in the Western Balkans. It covers an initial gap that can facilitate the creation and exchange of OER content. The project at its start most effectively empowers young people, more precisely PhD, MA, MSc students in research, and professionals.

List of tentative bottom-up speakers with National perspectives on Open Education:

- Opening up Slovenia: Borut Čampelj, Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, Education Development Office (ICT in education)
- Opening up Croatia: Sandra Kučina Softič, heading the E-Learning Centre at the University Computing Centre of the University of Zagreb
- Opening up Serbia: Ivan Obradović, Director Center for e-learning and distance education, University of Belgrade
- Opening up Macedonia: TBD
- Opening up Albania: TBD
- Opening up Bosnia and Herzegovina: TBD
- Opening up Montenegro: TBD

⁸ Connected database of all Slovenian research content <http://scienceatlas.ijs.si>