



On the trail of OE policy co-creation

By [Javiera Atenas](#) & [Leo Havemann](#)

We've recently returned from the OER19 conference in Galway, Ireland, where we had the opportunity of running the third edition of the Open Education Policy Co-creation (OEPC) workshop, and the outcomes were very interesting! But let's start from the beginning. This workshop was originally developed in the context of the [OpenMed project](#), to support the project stakeholders to develop Open Education Policies following the [Recommendations from OpenMed to University leaders and policy makers for opening up Higher Education in the South-Mediterranean by 2030](#).

The workshop aimed to give the project stakeholders some basic policy co-design skills, and as well as an overview of the key techniques and elements needed to opening up the arenas to foster sustainable policies. In order to support these objectives the workshop is grounded on the [participation and co-creation standard developed by OGP](#) to foster the co-creation of national commitments, and uses a set of cards and a canvas (adapted from those developed by the [UK Policy Lab](#)) aligning the elements with those recommended by the [Ljubljana Action Plan](#), and the JRC report, [Policy Approaches to Open Education](#).

The workshop elements aim at raising awareness of the international Landscape towards widening participation including a wide range of stakeholders, while, being resourceful, optimistic and flexible, to ensure that the policy design addresses the co-creation process in a specific context, involving a wide range of policy design partners to ensure the correct implementation, overseeing the opportunities and challenges of an OE policy, and the key elements these must comprise providing the evidence needed to support the stakeholders and to prevent risks of policy derailment.

The OE policy workshop fosters the assessment of data, research and experiences from national and international perspectives related to the socio-economic, political and cultural context in what is known as global policy convergence [[Haddad & Demsky \(1995\)](#); [Thompson & Cook \(2014\)](#)]

From Rome to Warsaw

We piloted the OEPC workshop at the [OpenMed conference](#) (Rome) with a group of stakeholders from Egypt, England, Italy, Jordan, Morocco, Palestine and Spain. Then, with [Fabio Nascimbeni](#) we re-tested the methodology at

the **OE Policy Forum** (Warsaw), with stakeholders from Germany, Malta, Poland, Romania, Spain, Slovenia, Sweden and The Netherlands. In both pilots, the participants agreed that core **processes and partners** for OE policy-making were co-design and collaboration, which should include not only senior management but academics, librarians and experts in copyright, as these could provide a wide range of perspectives related to their local **contexts** and needs. Also, the participants mentioned as **stakeholders** the need to work alongside with Open Science, Open Access and OE experts and policymakers to foster cohesion in Open Policies.



Regarding **solutions and approaches**, the participants mentioned the need to include experts in accreditation systems and copyright regulations, as these **policy opportunities** are key to foster sustainability in OE policy making, but also, are possible **challenges and barriers** for promoting the adoption of Open Educational Practices, alongside the lack of copyright and IP understanding, and scarce awareness of open practices amongst faculty, senior management, and policymakers, which prevent the acknowledgment of Open Practices for career progression, and, also diminish the chances for obtaining funding to implement OE policies. So, in order to enable an OE policy, the participants mentioned as **key elements** the recognition of Open Practices and accreditation of Open Learning were key, as these elements, can provide **evidence** to promote the adoption of Open Education alongside with

international good practices, data on cost-benefits of OER, national educational data and performance data to showcase the impact of Open Education.



According to the participants of the first two pilots, the main **beneficiaries** of an OE policy are learners and educators, however, families, general public, universities and governments can also benefit from Open Education by lowering costs of access to education while widening participation, although, the groups mentioned that it is key to be aware of the **risks** that an OE policy may face, are lack of political understanding of openness, as well as datafication and commodification of education and also, lobbying from commercial publishers and ed-tech vendors might severely impact upon or derail an OE policy initiative.

From Warsaw to Galway

With all this information in hand, and after carefully updating the kit according to the feedback given by the pilot participants, we ran a new edition of our workshop, billed as [Fostering Openness in Education: considerations for](#)

[sustainable policy making](#) at OER19, in which over 20 participants from Ireland, England, Scotland, Austria, The Netherlands, Australia and Spain participated.

For them, in order to foster co-creation of OE policies, **processes** such as the involvement of communities of practices and use spaces in global conferences are key, and also, the use of consultations and roundtables to discuss the policy at different stages. When discussing the **policy context**, the participants mentioned the importance of acknowledging the voices of diverse groups to ensure inclusivity, considering the level of access to technological infrastructure. When talking about **Policy Design Partners** the participants agree that educators, policy makers, librarians, learning technologists and education experts need to be involved, while others mentioned the need to include learners.

While discussing **opportunities** and **challenges**, the participants mentioned collaboration, innovation, chances to flourish and improvement of quality and access to education as key opportunities while, they highlighted as challenges, the commodification of education and conflicts of interest and agendas between negotiations between institutions and technology suppliers.



In relation to the **key elements** of an OE policy, the participants highlighted transparent practices, and bench-learning from existing policies in order to include accreditation and recognition of Open Learning, and also, to have elements that enable measurement of the impact of the policy, as impact data can be further reused by other institutions willing to develop their policies as **evidence**, including for example student success rates, uptake rates, learner engagement and amount of resources created and used. This evidence can provide data for recognition of educators' good practices, towards benefiting two groups of **key stakeholders** learners and the society as a whole through the provision of Open Content. Finally, in relation to **risks**, the participants



mentioned the lobby of commercial textbook publishers and from educational corporations taking advantage of Open Content to profit commercially.

From Galway to London

Following the Galway workshop, we have reviewed and compared the outcomes of the three workshops and found some fascinating stuff. Regarding **processes** in the Rome pilot, most of the discussion focused on the co-creation process, as for the participants, policy-making was most likely related to the governance processes and to senior management activities, as for the groups in Warsaw, it was key to connect OE with other educational reforms, and to align it with their Open Government Partnership strategies, while in Galway, the keyword was collaboration, as they saw the opportunity for fostering collective ownership when a policy is co-created. Regarding the **policy context**, for the groups in Rome, the need was related with the need of promoting innovation to enhance the quality of education in a context of overcrowded classrooms, while in Warsaw, lots of the discussion focused on the need of having content in national languages, and in Galway the key idea was inclusion and diversity, to provide learners with the content they need.

When discussing **Policy Design Partners** the participants in Rome highlighted the importance of involving international OE experts and the group in Warsaw mentioned learning technologists and copyright experts while in Galway, librarians and academics were mentioned. In relation with to policy **opportunities**, the groups in Rome mentioned access to quality educational materials and opportunities for distance learning, while in Warsaw, OE policies were seen as a mean to defeat the EU copyright reform and in Galway, the concepts of co-creation and collaboration to foster bottom-up policies was seen as a great advantage. In regards with the **challenges**, in Rome, the biggest one mentioned was overcrowding of classrooms and little flexibility for open learning accreditation, while in Warsaw the EU copyright reform and the ruthless publishers' lobby was seen as a major threat.

For the groups in Rome, Warsaw and Galway, the **key elements** were accreditation of open learning, and recognition of open education practices for career progression. For the participants in Rome, the key **evidence** was good practices on the use and production of OER at an international level, while in Warsaw, it was important to provide data on cost-benefits of OER, and in Galway, success rates, uptake rates and learning engagement data as key to foster an OE policy.

Finally, the **key stakeholders** for the group in Rome were learners, educators and universities while for the Warsaw group governments were also key, and for

the participants in Galway, the group extended to the society as a whole. In regards with the **risks**, the group in Rome mentioned lack of political understanding of openness, while the participants in Warsaw, were concerned about the current wave of datafication, commodification and marketisation of education and furthermore, worried at the tactics used by publishers and ed-tech vendors/gurus, as this set of practices were of potential danger not only to OE but to education in general, and this concern was widely replicated in the Galway session.

Is interesting to see that in some cases the groups see elements from different perspectives, and while for the groups in Warsaw and in Galway shared some concerns regarding datafication and copyright, the participants in Rome were more concerned by the lack of IT literacies. It is also interesting each group, without being connected, builds on top of each other, and that for all the international OE community it is key to foster sustainable OE policies that can provide evidence of good practices to promote the adoption of OE.

From London to Lisbon

Our next stop is Lisbon, we will be holding another [OE policy co-creation workshop](#) at the CC summit, so join us Friday, May 10th from 3:30pm – 4:25pm.





Next steps

If you think that your institution or a consortium of institutions may benefit from this open policy-making exercise, please get in touch with Leo Havemann <leo.havemann@open.ac.uk> or with Javiera Atenas <javiera.atenas@idatosabiertos.org>

References

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About the authors



Javiera Atenas: PhD in Education and co-coordinator of the Open Education Working Group, responsible for the promotion of Open Data, Open Policies and Capacity Building in Open Education. She is also a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and the Education Lead at the Latin American Initiative for Open Data [ILDA] as well as an academic and researcher with interest in the use of Open Data as Open Educational Resources and in critical pedagogy. [@jatenas](#)



Leo Havemann: Is a Digital Education Advisor at UCL, and a postgraduate researcher in OE at the Open University. He is a co-ordinator of the M25 Learning Technology Group. His research interests include open educational practices, skills and literacies, and technology-enhanced assessment and feedback. He has taught in HE in New Zealand and Australia and has a Master's from the U. of Waikato. [@leohavemann](#)