

Open Education in European Libraries of Higher Education 2023

March 2024

This work was supported by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

**'Open Education in European Libraries of
Higher Education 2023'**

Report commissioned by:
SPARC Europe

<https://sparceurope.org/>

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Report DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.10889503



Report dated: March 2024
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of SPARC Europe's 2023 Survey of European higher education institutions on the topic of Open Education (OE) and Open Educational Resources (OER) in consultation with the European Network of Open Education Librarians (ENOEL).

The report is for policymakers and practitioners who support or intend to support OE and OER in higher education institutions and academic libraries. Libraries remain key to supporting OE and OER although other departments and individuals play complementary and often lead roles, albeit from a different perspective and focus in terms of the support they provide and the skills they bring. *Copyright and Open licensing, Information literacy and Training / Education* are the most common areas of support offered by those involved in OE and OER.

Resource constraints, including funding, staffing, and uncertainties around licensing and intellectual property rights, are prominent challenges. OE and OER have helped many institutions create a collaborative culture, but other institutions continue to struggle with resistance and lack of buy-in. Lack of awareness, staff and leadership prevents more institutions from adopting more active support; yet OE and OER are seen to benefit staff and students by creating greater visibility of their work and materials.

There is ongoing progress in support of OE and OER, and their adoption across Europe. Whether they have formal policy roles or not, national and international networks and specific projects are key drivers of this progress. However, progress is still reliant on the presence of experienced and enthusiastic individuals who often have multiple competing responsibilities beyond OE and OER, including Open Science, and lack dedicated OE resources.

OE is around three times as likely to be incorporated into an institution's broader stack of policies than it is in a standalone policy, commonly as part of Open Science and broader education-themed policies. This is mirrored in task forces with a focus on OE, which are four times as likely to be broadly focused than they are to have a standalone OE focus.

The survey responses demonstrate that the foundations for future progress are in place. More institutions are adopting policies, dedicating resources and developing mechanisms to support OE and OER. Collaboration remains the key driver of this progress, between institutions but also among the different departments within them.

The following recommendations emerge from this report, although readers are encouraged to prioritise actions based on their reading of the survey responses and their own institutional contexts.

- Promote awareness and visibility of OE and OER among leadership and staff to encourage and sustain greater adoption and support, emphasising the importance of dedicated resources and depth of experience among institutional staff.
- Facilitate discussion between institutions at different stages in the development of OE and OER, recognising that the challenges institutions face early on in the process are often those which have been overcome by institutions more advanced in the field and whose experience can demonstrate the related benefits that OE and OER bring.
- Seek connections between different networks promoting OE, especially those with formal roles to play in OE development and those with wider remits seeking to facilitate discussion. This type of dialogue will help to spread advocacy and promotion of OE and OER beyond still-limited groups. Bringing together staff in different roles and departments within institutions will also help build on the strength of support within the library community and link it to other movements and groups.
- Grow OE in higher education with policies and task forces at the institutional level, incorporating incentives, recognition and rewards to overcome cultural challenges. There is space for innovation and experimentation, adapting and building on practices already in place at institutions with more advanced OE & OER programmes.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of SPARC Europe's Survey of European higher education institutions on the topic of Open Education (OE) and Open Educational Resources (OER) in consultation with the European Network of Open Education Librarians (ENOEL).

The survey was conducted between November 2023 and January 2024, with analysis and documentation completed in February and March 2024.

A copy of the survey may be found [here](#). The full data set of responses, appropriately anonymised according to the SPARC Europe privacy policy may be found [here](#). Appendix A sets out the methodology used to generate and analyse these responses.

2. SURVEY RESULTS

2.1. PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

The 116 responses in the final dataset included representation from across Europe, with Finland, Poland and France generating at least ten responses each (Figure 1).



Figure 1: In what country is your organisation based? (n=116)

The reduction in responses from the 2022 survey is almost entirely due to fewer responses from Spain, which generated 31 responses in 2022 down to 3 in 2023. While it is difficult to be certain, the reduction in responses may be attributable to changes in key staff in OE networks. The window of the survey coincided with a period of intense activity for libraries involved with a research accreditation process. The survey response rate was still positive and provided useful and important insights, and the responses highlight the ongoing importance of individuals and personal networks, as well as the competing pressures OE and OER face for resources. Where relevant, the geographic breakdown of respondents highlights interesting or significant trends through this analysis.

A significant majority of respondents (82 respondents or 70%) came from universities or institutions offering education in a comprehensive range of disciplines (Figure 2). This closely resembled the profile of responses from 2022.

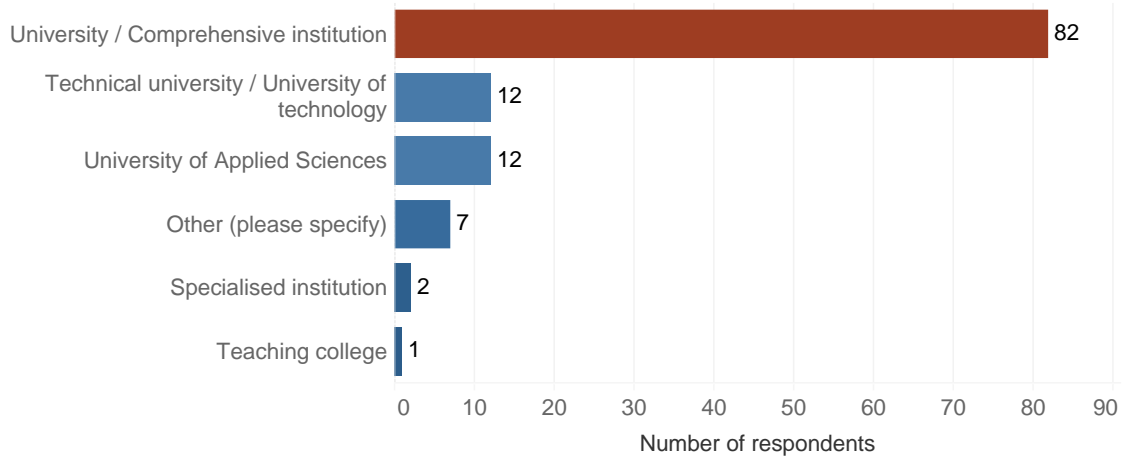


Figure 2: Which of the following best describes your organisation? (Please select one) (n=116)

Technical universities & Universities of applied sciences generated a further 12 responses each. Seven more came from other types of institutions, all but one of which were Libraries with their own legal standing separate from a university or other higher education institution.

When asked what department their role was based in, 75 respondents (i.e. around 75%) said the library. In previous years, the survey was solely directed towards libraries, and so the 2023 cohort of respondents represents a broader range of perspectives (Figure 3).

Previous surveys in 2021 and 2022 targeted library staff, and the survey bypassed responsible staff in institutions where the library was not directly involved in OE or did not take the lead. As such, the survey has been adapted to make it easier to accommodate a broader range of respondents to provide a more comprehensive picture of OE at a Higher Education institution.

The Library was the main respondent of the survey, and Education and Teaching services was the second driver of responses. Non-library respondents came from across Europe, with 15 different countries represented; respondents based in libraries came from 21 countries. Where relevant, the departmental breakdown of respondents highlights notable differences between library and non-library responses.

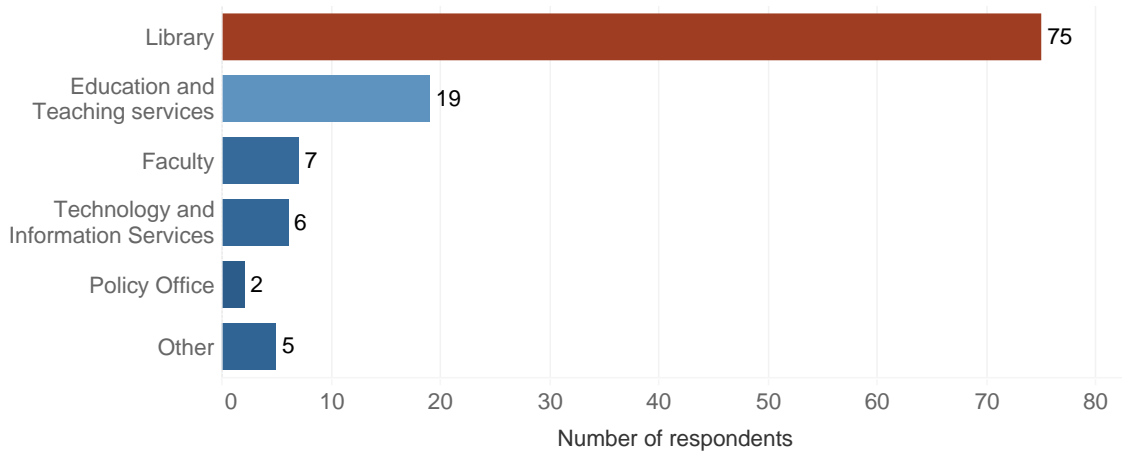


Figure 3: In which department is your role based? (n=114)

When asked how long they had been involved in supporting OE, around 30% of respondents had been doing so for between 1 and 2 years; a further 30% had done so between 3 to 5 years (Figure 4). In 2022, the question asked only about experience between 1 and 5 years; around 50% of respondents had this depth of experience. As such, 2023 responses represent a slight increase on 2022, which was itself a slight increase on 2021.

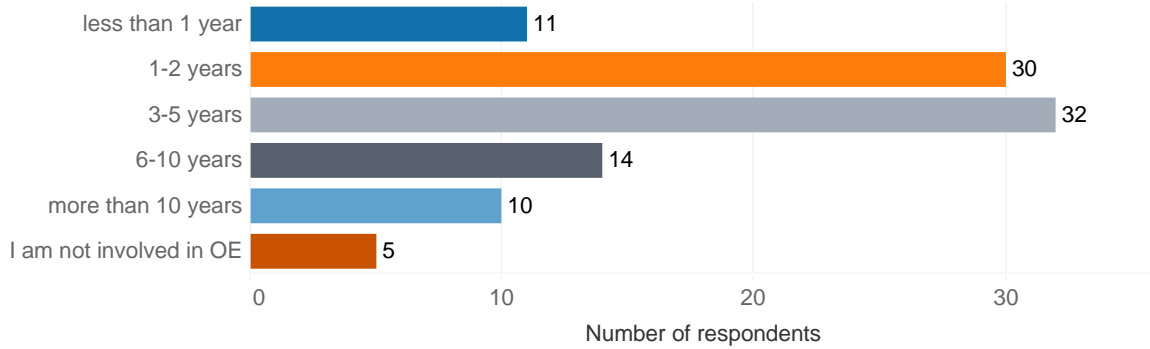


Figure 4: How long have you been involved in OE? (n=102)

The cohort who had been involved in OER for more than 5 years had also grown slightly since 2022, up from 19% to 24%. This was driven by greater longevity of service outside of libraries; those involved in OER for more than 5 years remains at 19% for those in libraries but lies at 36% outside them.

Respondents were asked about their role within their organisations, and their 97 respondents provided an answer via open text. Some variation of the title ‘librarian’ was used by 29 respondents, and another 14 holding a role that included the word ‘library’ (e.g. Head of Library, Library Director, Library Manager). Beyond this, there was a wide variation, including ‘Information Specialists’, ‘Project Leaders’ or ‘Project Managers’ and several posts with OE or OER in the title.

2.2. DEPARTMENTAL ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Respondents consistently see their own department taking a lead (27 respondents or 27%) or a supporting role (47 or 47%) in advancing OE and OER. (Figure 5)

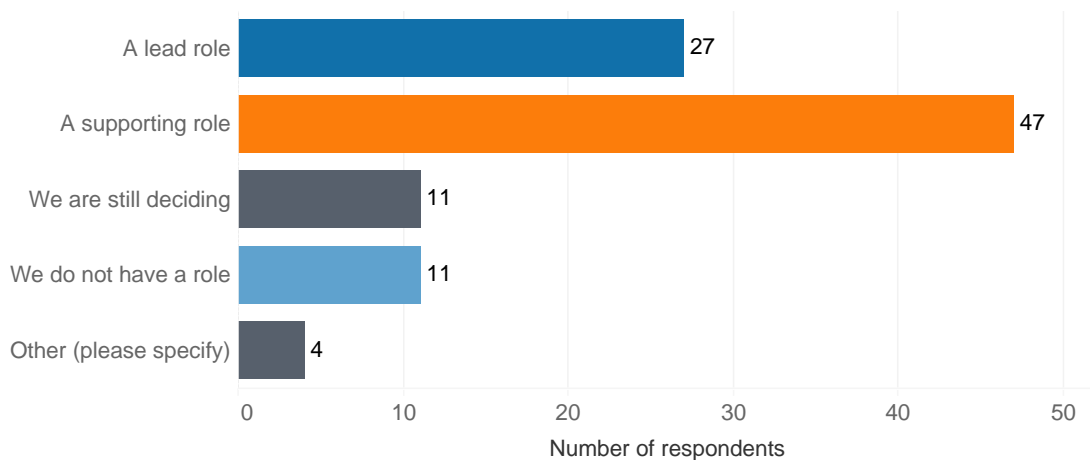


Figure 5: What role does your department take in advancing OE or OER in your organisation? (n=100)

These top-line figures closely represent those from 2022 where 26% of respondents saw their department playing a lead role and 41% a supporting role. Outside the library, they were far more likely to take a lead role at 36% compared to 24% of respondents based within libraries. (Figure 6)

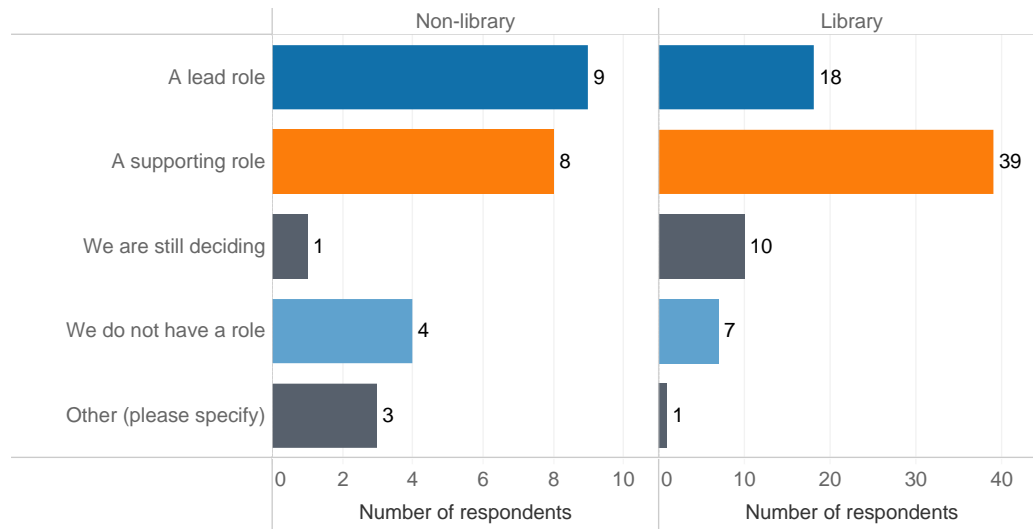


Figure 6: What role does your department take in advancing OE or OER in your organisation? (n=100) split by department

Respondents highlighted that departments outside their own also played a role in advancing OE, with Education and Teaching services the most common. Faculty and Technology Services regularly played a role. (Figure 7)

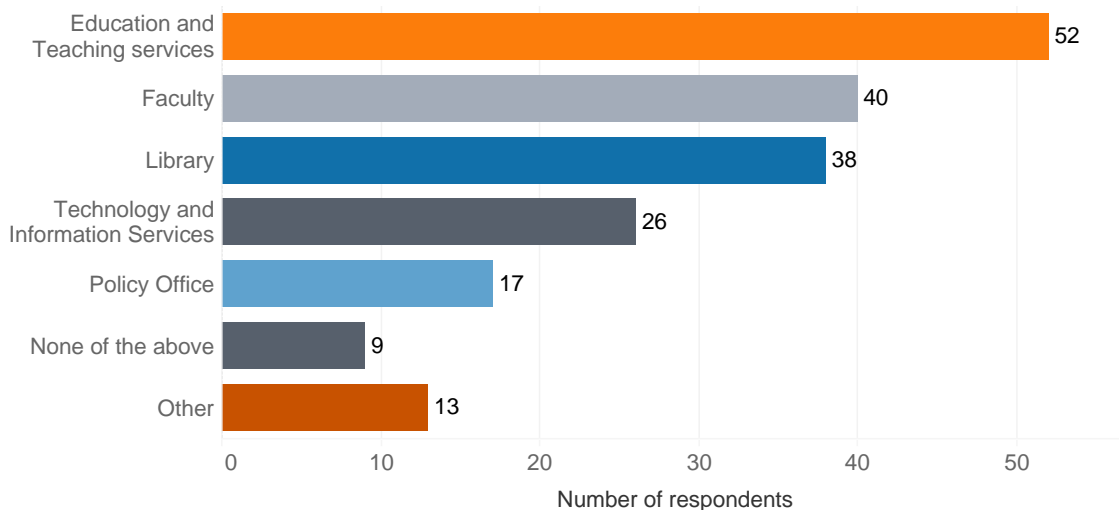


Figure 7: Which departments, other than your own, are involved in OE in your institution? (97)

Only nine respondents said no other departments played a role, while other departments were mentioned in free text by individuals, including Publishing services, Legal affairs and Continuous Learning.

Where Education Services and the Library in the same institution both provided responses, Education Services always played the lead role in supporting OE.

2.3. SERVICES & SKILLS

Respondents provide a range of services in relation to OE and OER. Around 70% of respondents offer advice on Copyright and Open licensing, Information literacy and Training / Education. (Figure 8)

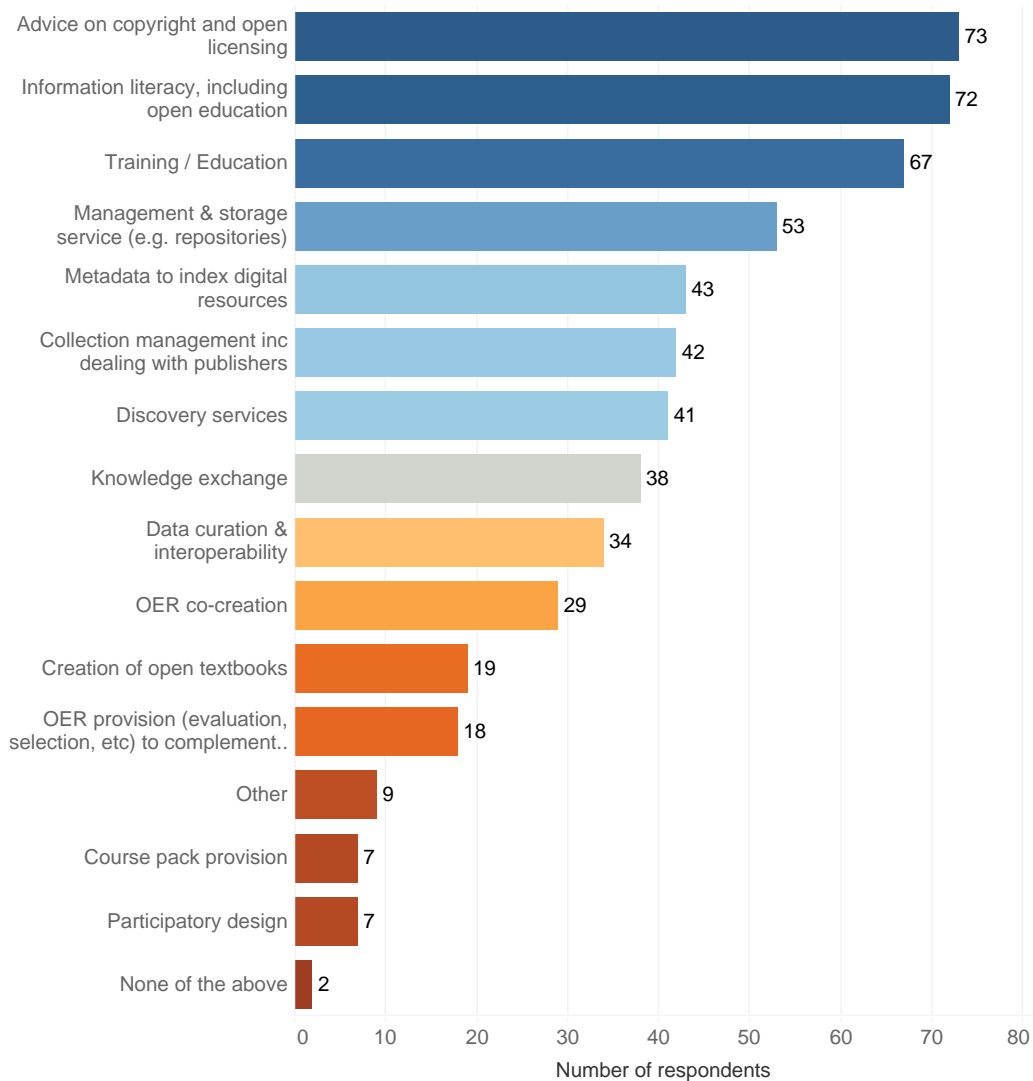


Figure 8: What services do you provide that relate to OE? Please choose as many as apply (n=99)

This pattern was very consistent with previous years' surveys, and there was very little irrespective of which country or department respondents were based. However, Education and Training was offered by 84% of non-library respondents, making it the most commonly offered service for that group.

Where respondents answered 'Other', individuals referred to support for developing wiki pages, offering consultation, outreach and advocacy, and the promotion of wider open practices in Open Software and Open Access.

Respondents were asked to provide additional details via open text on the services they offer and who is involved in offering them. Multiple departments are frequently involved in offering services - either in collaboration or offering different elements in different departments. The following responses highlight the themes from responses:

Many departments are involved a little. Open Science, Electronic Publishing, etc. Advice on copyright etc. is done in a different department.

The services are provided by various teams in the Library, for example the copyright and licensing team, metadata team, digital preservation team and the faculty engagement team.

We are still in the process of raising awareness and strengthening cooperation between the library, the legal service and our partner university, mainly through sharing information, pedagogy related to open resources and participation.

At the university, the library has the responsibility for coordinating open science development and activities in an overall perspective (in this case, make sure that someone in the organisation takes the responsibility to provide at least minimum service level for teaching staff. The main responsibility for providing support services for teaching staff is on the educational services.

There may not be any services offered that are branded OE or OER, but elements are embedded in support for broader topics instead, for example, Open science, publishing, copyright, or digital skills.

Mainly we support OE with the support of Libraries and IT. However, it's not structured explicitly as 'open education support'.

We are mostly providing support and training related to copyright, licensing and information in general, but not specifically applied to OE for the moment.

A number of respondents highlighted that the nature of the services they offer was influenced by developments outside their institution. They had adapted their offer following services offered by other institutions, or reflecting learnings from networks or groups of which they were part.

We learn some skills from ENOEL members or from libguides (including videos) created by foreign libraries. "The tactic of small steps - little by little, but constantly!"

We have a national repository of Higher Education OER (edusources). We have been piloting last year with our institution and now it is a full service we provide (demonstrations, uploading, metadating, making collections etc., also for students). Next year we will begin to experiment with open textbooks (together with our University Press).

We have published several OER... during the last two years (mainly videos and a game) as well as co-produced an open module. We participated in different workshops, conferences and sessions on the topic and started a group, to facilitate the topical exchange within our institution and are networking with other...OER creators.

Services are developed and delivered with different audiences in mind, sometimes within a single institution.

The library's educational support service provides information literacy and open science education [for] undergraduates, PhD students, young academic publishers. The service is currently running educational projects aimed at creating open learning tools

We manage professional development for... teachers, including 500-1000 every year.

In areas where they provided services, respondents were asked whether appropriate skills were available. For all types of service, very clear majorities had a full set of skills in place or many of the skills required. (Figure 9)

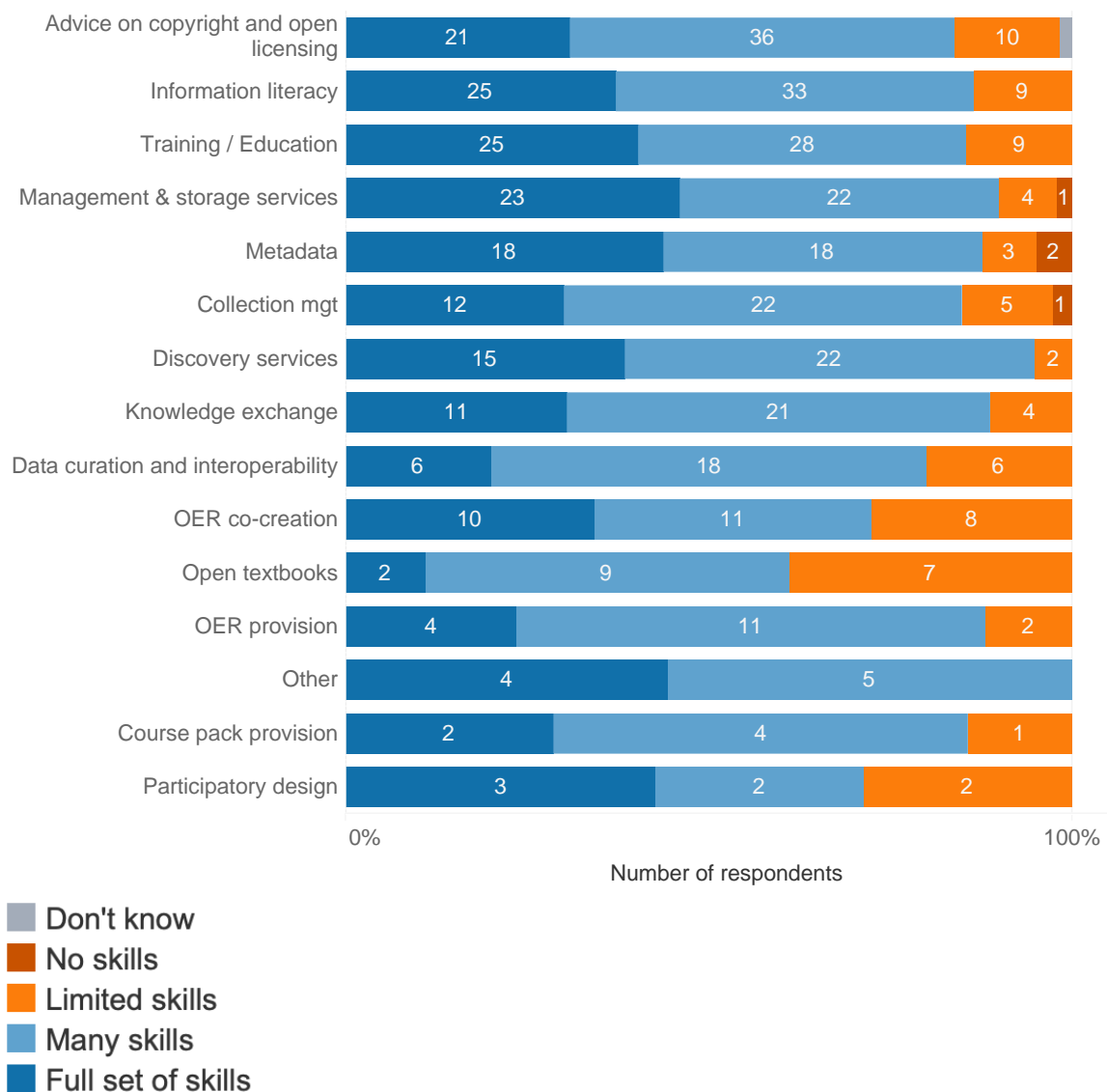


Figure 9: To what extent does your department have the skills it needs to support OE in these areas? (n=89)

Open textbooks were the only area in which more than 30% of respondents said that they had only limited skills; in only 4 cases did a respondent say that there were none of the skills required - these related to Management & Storage services, Metadata & Collection management. In only 1 case did the respondent say that they did not know about Advice on copyright and open licensing.

Respondents were asked to provide additional details via open text on the areas in which they felt limited or had no skills to provide the services offered.

Some respondents highlighted that this was a temporary state of affairs as they were still developing the services and learning the skills required, sometimes under rapidly changing conditions. In some cases, the lack of skills was rather a function of the wording of the question, and in fact the skills were available elsewhere in the institution or provided by an external supplier. In some cases, however, there were simply insufficient skills and resources to staff the services on offer due to small teams or excess demand. This theme emerges strongly under 'Benefits and Challenges' below.

2.4. EFFECTIVE & INCLUSIVE ACCESS

Just under a third of respondents said that their organisation was promoting effective and inclusive access in OE programmes, with three each in the Netherlands, Switzerland and Ukraine. A further 36 respondents or 44% are considering doing so, with seven of these based in Finland. (Figure 10)

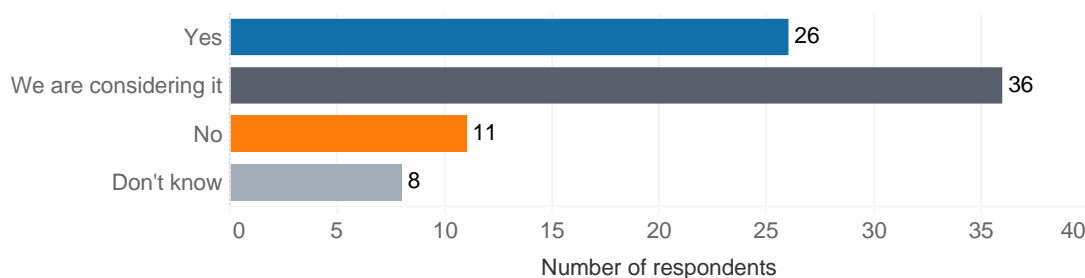


Figure 10: Do you actively seek to promote effective and inclusive access in OER programmes? (n=81)

A majority of those promoting access are doing so via an institution-wide approach, at 51% or 14 respondents. A further 25% or 7 respondents are doing so via a Working Group. (Figure 11). Other responses highlighted the efforts of staff in day-to-day operations, participating in cross-institutional or national schemes, or by working with specialist diversity, equity and inclusion teams.

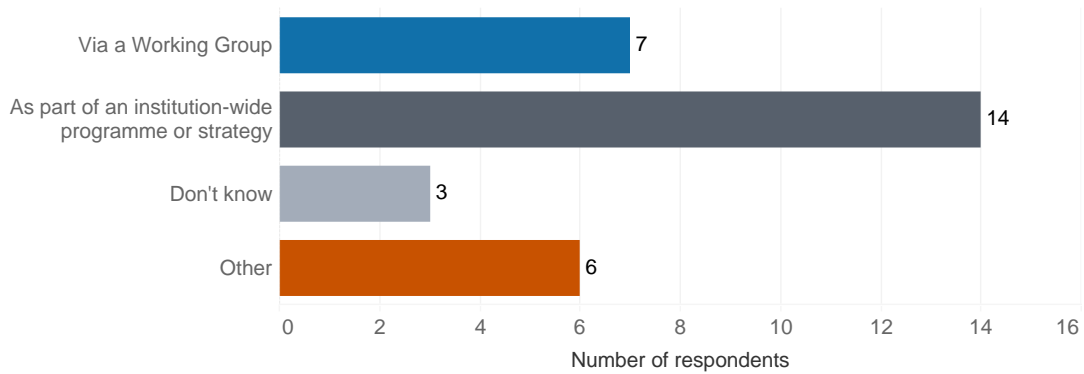


Figure 11: How does your organisation promote effective and inclusive access in OE programmes? (n=30)

2.5. POLICIES & TASK FORCES

Only 26 respondents or 29% said that their institution had a policy in place that addressed OE in any way; a further 25 or 28% said that they had no such policy in place; 32 or 35% of respondents had policies under consideration or development. (Figure 12). This shows progress on the 2022 survey when only 18% had a policy in place, with 42% having one in development or under consideration.

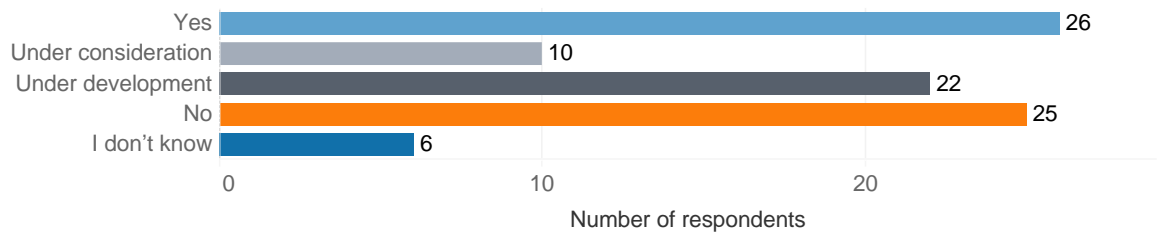


Figure 12: Does your organisation have a policy that addresses OE in any way? (n=89)

Most of the policies that exist relate to Open Science, and OE is one strand of activity among wider commitments an institution has made to Open Science; a third of these Open Science policies were from Finnish respondents, the only noteworthy trend amongst the responses. (Figure 13).

There were ten respondents or 21%, whose organisations have a standalone Open Education policy in place, slightly more than the seven respondents whose organisations had adopted a broad policy encompassing OE but which was not Open Science.

Other respondents referred to an Open Access policy, a broader 'quality education' policy and ongoing discussions within their institution.

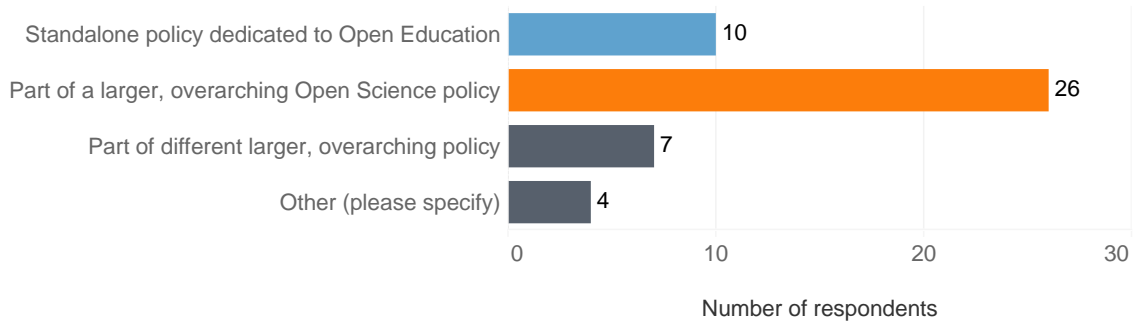


Figure 13: Is your organisation’s OE policy part of a larger, overarching internal policy, or is it a standalone policy dedicated to OE? (n=47)

With respect to task forces, a very slight majority, made up of 46 (or 51%) respondents, said that their institutions did not have any such body in place with a focus on OE; a further 15 or 16% did not know (Figure 14)

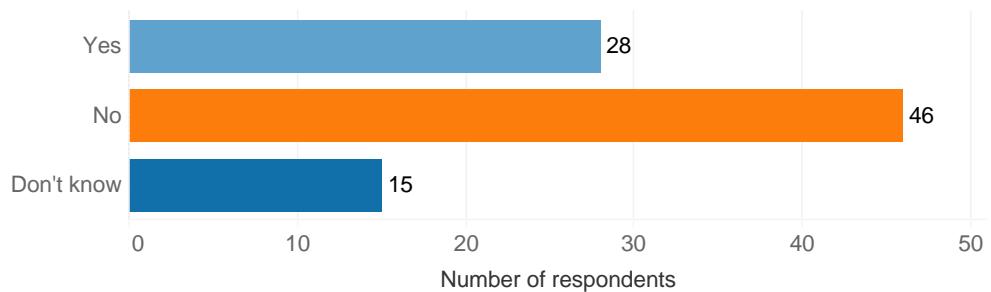


Figure 14: Does your organisation have a task force that addresses OE in any way? (n=89)

Of those institutions that do have such a task force in place, around 40% are in the Netherlands and Finland. Most of the task forces operate at the institutional level, with a further group operating at the library level. For those responding with ‘Other’, one operated outside the institution as a collaboration, the other ‘in the third space (intersection between academic and administrative departments)’

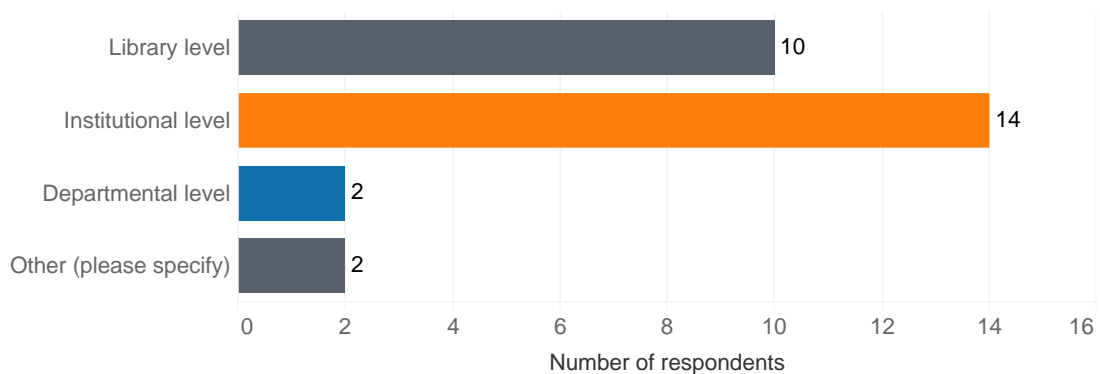


Figure 15: At what level in the organisation is the task force? (n=28)

Only 6 respondents said that their institution had a task group focused exclusively on OE, with nearly three times as many having responsibility for Open Science activities as a whole including OE, and the same number again focusing on other topics, notably broader education activity (Figure 16)

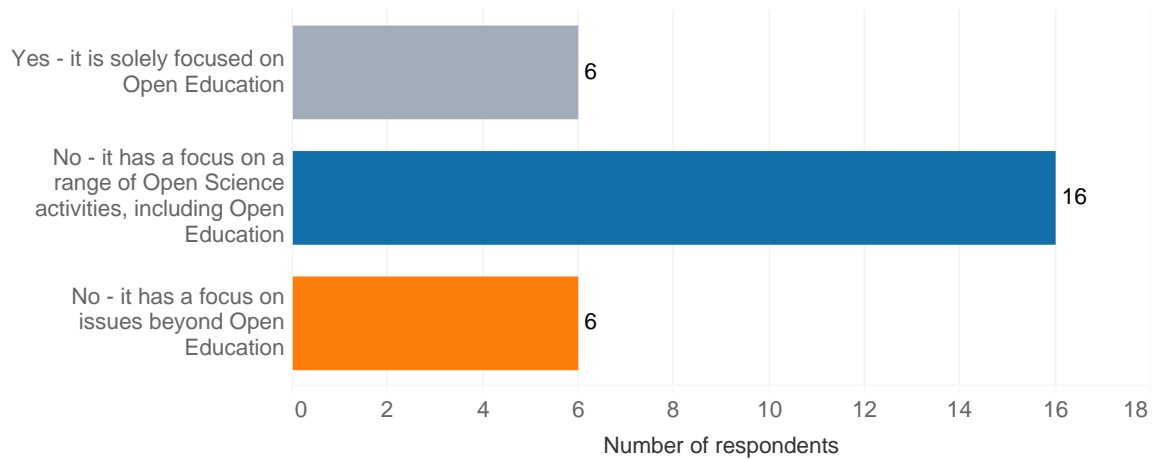


Figure 16: Is the task force solely focused on OE or does it have a broader remit? (n=28)

Respondents were also asked which departments were involved in the task force. A coding error in the survey prevented them from choosing more than one answer at a time from the list of options, which was as follows:

- Library
- Education & Teaching Services
- Faculty
- Technology & Information Services
- Policy Office
- Other

The library was the most common response among those who selected just one department, but 11 respondents chose 'Other' and used the free text to highlight the range of departments involved. (Figure 17)

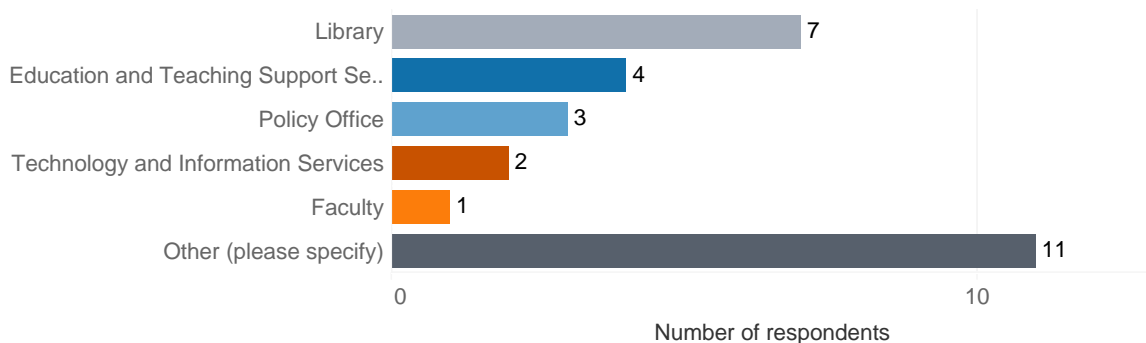


Figure 17: Which departments are involved in the task force or committee? Please select all that apply (n=28)

A total of 8 respondents chose a combination of Library, Education & Teaching Services, Faculty, Technology & Information Services. Research Support Services and Communication Services also named for their involvement by individual respondents.

2.6. MECHANISMS FOR SUPPORTING OE & OER

2.6.1. Staff working on OE & OER

The number of full-time equivalent (FTE) staff working on OE or OER is less than 1 FTE for around 30% of respondents' organisations. This is down substantially from 45% in 2022; there has been an offsetting increase in the proportion of organisations with between 1-5 FTE at just under 30% in 2023, up from 21% in 2022.

The proportion of institutions with 0 FTE has fallen by around 10%, while the proportion of respondents with six or more FTE has remained about the same. Respondents answering 'Don't Know' were only 2% in 2022 but are now nearly 20% of the total. (Figure 18)

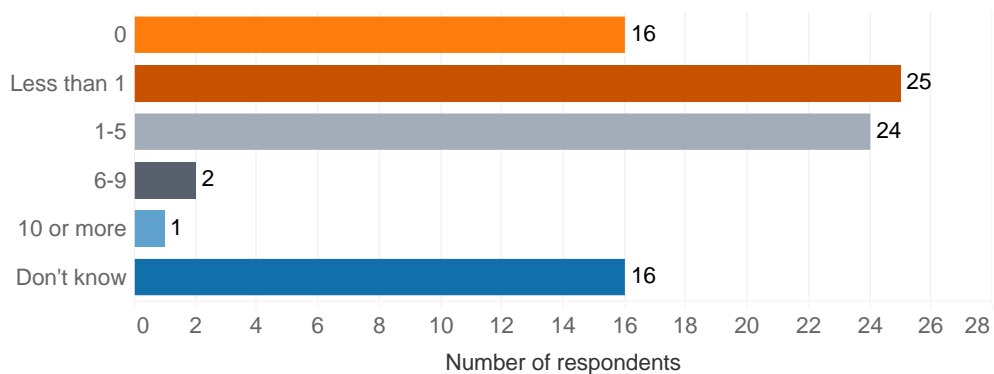


Figure 18: How many FTE (full time equivalent) staff members are dedicated to working on OE? (n=84)

Restricting the responses to just respondents in libraries, the picture is more consistent with the prior year, with those outside the library more commonly in the 1-5 FTE category.

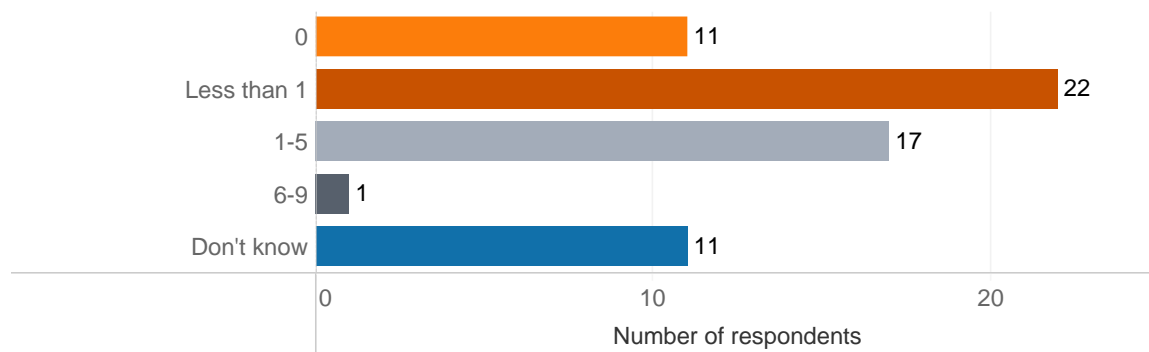


Figure 19: How many FTE (full time equivalent) staff members are dedicated to working on OE? (n=62); respondents from libraries only

2.6.2. OE budgets

Budgets supporting OER are spread across institutions. 29 or around 40% of respondents said funding was in a library budget, while 26 or 35% chose other institutional budgets. This represents a reduction on 2022 survey, where 54% of respondents said funding was from library

budgets, and only 24% flagged other institutional projects. Ten institutions received European Project funding, while 17 used regional or national funds. (Figure 20)

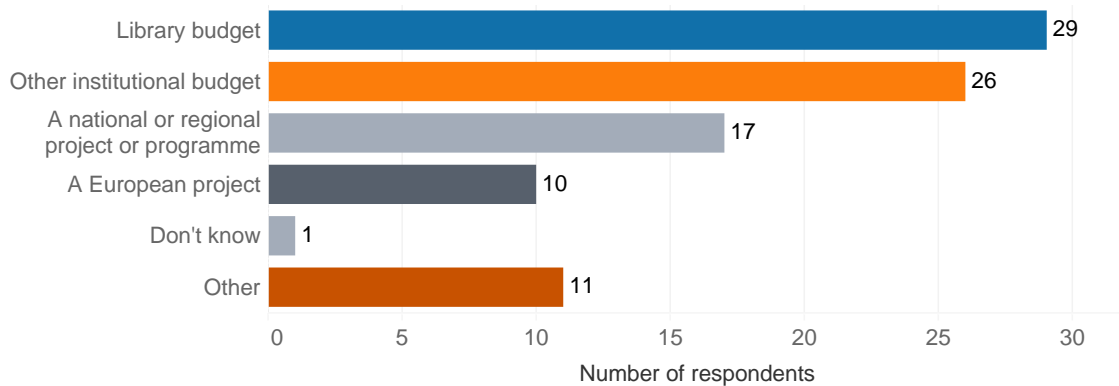


Figure 20: From which budget or budgets does funding for OE come? Please select all that apply (n=94)

Respondents who answered 'Other' highlighted the lack of any specific budget (3 respondents), a lack of knowledge as to where the budget was held (3 respondents), researcher budgets (2 respondents) and other unspecified pots of funding.

2.6.3. Seed funding & grant programmes

Only 14 respondents or 16% were aware of seed funding or grant programmes to support the creation of OERs, although this represents a slight increase on 2022. (Figure 21)

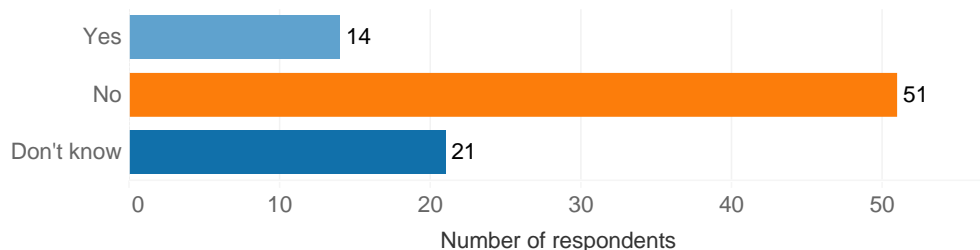


Figure 21: Does your organisation have a grant programme or seed funding that supports the creation of OERs? (n=86)

The seed funding or grant programmes provided by respondents highlight a wide range of approaches across just these 14 institutions. Five respondents identified national and / or ministry programmes on OER with funding attached and a range of institutional project funds related to OE and OER were identified. Respondents highlighted schemes related to:

- Institutional repository
- Digital education and skills
- Digital Transformation
- Open Science projects
- Teaching development
- Open Scholarship
- Internship and student experience funding
- Innovation in pedagogy

2.6.4. OE networks & projects

Many respondents flagged that their institutions are involved in OE networks (46 respondents, 56%, Figure 22) and OE projects (26 respondents, 33%, Figure 23). Respondents in Finland, the Netherlands and Switzerland were responsible for over 40% of those involved in OE networks and OE projects.

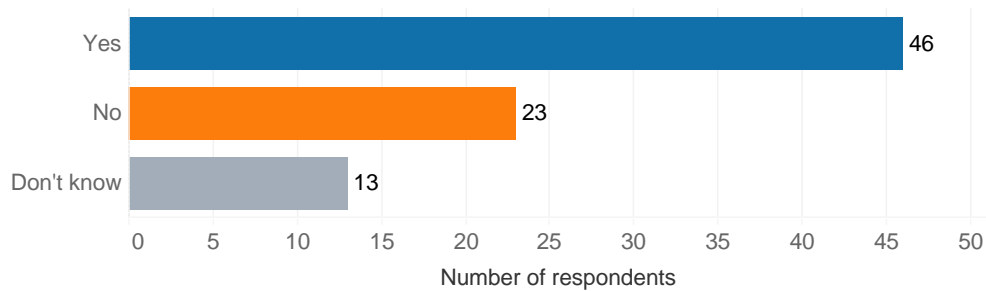


Figure 22: Is your organisation involved in creating, maintaining or participating in OE networks? (n=82)

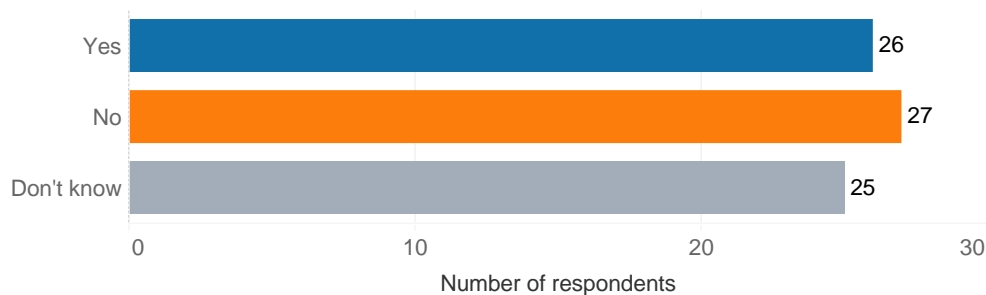


Figure 23: Is your organisation involved in creating, maintaining or participating in OE projects? (n=82)

Respondents named 37 different entities, projects or groups in which they participated; just under a third are international bodies, and many of the bodies were mentioned multiple times by different respondents (see numbers in brackets in Table 1). Some of the bodies identified have a formal responsibility for development or provision of OE and OER, while others have a broader or tangential remit and are providing space in which to facilitate dialogue on OE and OER within that remit.

Level	Focus	Name
National	Open Education	Coalition for Open Education (Poland)
		Open Education Austria (2)
		UK OER Conference
		Wikiwijs (Netherlands)
	Higher Education Institutions	Digivision2030 (Finland)
		JISC (UK)
		Open Science project of Universiteiten van Nederland (UNL)
		'P8' Digital Skills working group of swissuniversities
		Special Interest Group on OER of Swiss Higher Education Institutions
		Surf (5); specifically the edusources platform for OER
	Education and Technology	Association for Learning Technology (UK)
		Deutsche Initiative für Netzwerkinformation nestor-AG Forschungsdaten (Research Data Working Group of German initiative for network information)
		Digital Educational Resources hub of NPULS (Netherlands) (2)
		iMoox (Austria)
		OER working group of fnma (Forum Neue Medien in der Lehre Austria / New Media Forum in Teaching Austria)
	Repositories	Dabar, Hrčak (Digital Academic Archives and Repositories, Croatia)
		Kallipos (Greece)
		OER Repo AG (Austrian OER repositories group)
		RepManNet (Network of Repository Managers, Austria)

	Libraries	B-OOO Libraries and Open and Online Education working group (Netherlands)
		Commission Pédagogie et documentation, Association des directeurs et personnels de direction des bibliothèques universitaires et de la documentation (ADBU) / (Pedagogy and Documentation Commission, French Association of Directors and Management Staff of University Libraries and Documentation (ADBU))
		OER Creator Workshop developed by librarians at Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW)
		Open Education Special Interest Group of bibliosuisse
		UAS libraries' national OE resources working group (Finland)
		VOEB Kommission für Informationskompetenz (Vereinigung Österreichischer Bibliothekarinnen und Bibliothekare / Association of Austrian Librarians' Commission for Information Literacy)
	Other	Open Science Expert Panels (2) (Finland)
	International	Open Education
Open Education Network		
Open Education Week (2)		
Higher Education Institutions		SEA-EU
Libraries		European Network of Open Education Librarians (ENOEL) (10)
		LIBER Open Educational Resources working group (3)
Repositories		Eduopen (3)
		OpenAIRE
Other		ERASMUS+ (3)
		European Open Science Cloud (via specific Task forces)

Table 1: List of networks and projects in which respondents participate

2.6.5. Rewards & recognition

Only 10 respondents or 12% said that their institution had any reward mechanisms in place to promote OE & OER, although more than double this number are considering such an approach. (Figure 24)

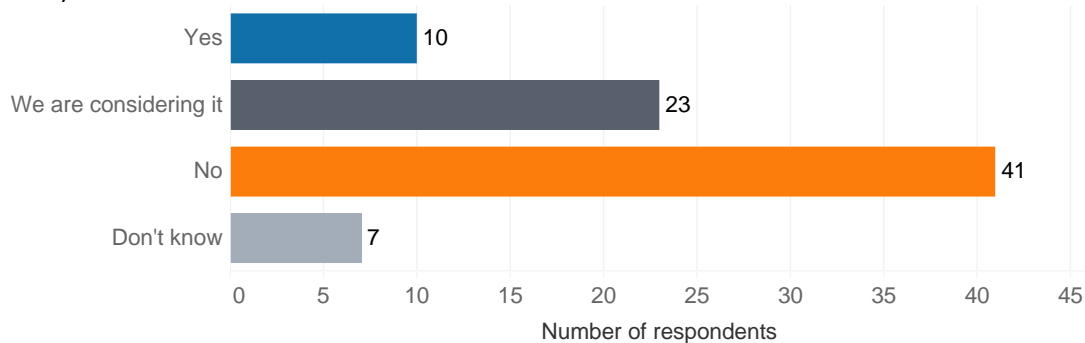


Figure 24: Are OE or OER rewarded or recognised in your organisation, whether formally or informally? (n=81)

Respondents specified the mechanisms in place in their organisations as follows:

- OE set as criteria when on assessment of internal project proposals or evaluation of performance
- Reviewing or publishing materials on OE platform included as a part of staff's performance record
- Inclusion of OER in guide to career pathways
- Institutional awards including recognition of OE / OER
- Incentive points leading to cash bonuses
- Ad hoc financial reward of successful open publishing

2.7. BENEFITS & CHALLENGES

Respondents were asked to provide details of up to three major benefits they have identified from supporting OE in their organisation, as well as up to three major challenges experienced in supporting OE.

Respondents identified 295 different benefits and challenges - with slightly fewer benefits (143) than challenges (152). Answers were provided in a free text format, and to analyse the diverse qualitative responses collected, data was broken down into clusters and consistent themes were identified. An individual benefit or challenge could be categorised against more than one theme, although this was rare with respondents generally providing concise and focused answers, as encouraged by the format of the survey.

The major themes which emerged from responses are summarised as follows Table 2 below, listed in order of the frequency with which they appeared:

	Benefit	Challenge
Culture	29	38
Resources	23	35
Visibility / Awareness	23	20
Access / Reach	30	1
Skills / Knowledge	13	12
Legal status	1	12
Policy	2	11
Science / Research	7	5
Leadership	1	8
Quality	5	4
Understanding of education	6	
Other	4	5

Table 2: Key benefits and challenges identified by respondents

The two biggest issues which informed the 2022 survey and (thus partly by definition) responses to it - the COVID-19 pandemic the incorporation of the UNESCO OER Recommendations - are not mentioned at all by any of the respondents, either as benefits or challenges. The absence of these two issues from the responses suggests their impact is less significant than was previously thought or sufficient time has passed that the impact has been absorbed into the background noise of broader trends and considerations.

The challenges reported this year are in line with those reported in prior years, with some variation in nuance as a result of format and interpretation, but the key elements are strongly correlated. The nature of comments provided under each theme are spelled out below, including a further breakdown of the five most common themes into more detailed categories, again listed in order of frequency.

2.7.1. Culture

Culture and topics relating to cultural change were the most commonly expressed whether respondents were highlighting benefits or challenges to Open Education (Table 3). These comments related to how support for OE and OER had positively affected the culture in an institution or how an inability to change culture had prevented or slowed adoption of OE. This highlights the different experiences of different institutions at different stages on the route to supporting OE and OER.

	Benefit	Challenge
Collaboration	14	6
Resistance / buy in	1	19
Incentives	1	9
Sharing	7	2
Other	6	3

Table 3: Key benefits and challenges identified by respondents relating to culture

Collaboration was the most consistently cited benefit of OE in cultural terms, bringing teams across an institution together, with ‘educational services’ and ‘teachers and lectures involved in pedagogical innovation and research’, as well as external institutions. However, some respondents also highlighted the challenges of ‘working across institutional boundaries’ and in being able to ‘find a relevant number of collaborators’.

The development of ‘a culture of sharing’ is related to this point, and respondents mentioned sharing experience, information and ideas as specific benefits. However, challenges were reported because there remain fears sharing findings and data and thus some hesitancy to share resources.

Resistance to change is prevalent across institutions and the challenge of overcoming it to generate buy-in is a consistent theme. ‘Low adoption among educators’, ‘no buy-in at all from academic staff’ and ‘desire to work with traditional resources’ were cited as specific challenges, although ‘student engagement’ was cited as a benefit of OE by one respondent.

Incentives, or specifically the lack of them, were cited as a challenge by a number of respondents. This is closely linked to challenges around resourcing since a lack of funds makes it nearly impossible to establish effective incentives. Still, most respondents were highlighting specifically the cultural lack of incentives for OE - the absence of mechanisms for ‘motivating teaching staff to open their teaching/courses/resources’ and ‘lack of recognition from the institution and from teachers themselves’.

Other cultural topics raised by individual respondents as benefits were the ‘Academic freedom & freedom in educational innovation’, ‘sense of powerful responsibility in everyday work’ and ‘inspiration’. Concerns about the fit of OE and OER into the teaching culture were highlighted as challenges.

2.7.2. Resources

Challenges with the resources deployed to support OE and OER were highlighted by a large number of respondents, although there were benefits related to resources as well. (Table 4)

	Benefit	Challenge
Budget	6	4
Funding	1	5
Pricing	7	
Platform		2
Teaching staff	1	9
Other staff (or staff in general)	2	13
General lack of resources	1	3
Other	6	1

Table 4: Key benefits and challenges identified by respondents relating to resources

Budget and specifically the budgetary implications of OE were seen as a benefit by respondents, due to perceived cost savings the use of OER can bring and there being no need to spend ‘our very small budget’ on teaching resources. This is essentially the same point as those who highlighted ‘pricing’ as the major benefit of OE, that is the lower or non-existent costs of accessing OER compared to traditional resources, and specifically textbooks.

Conversely, the lack of financial resources and available budget to support OE activity were seen as a major challenge by several respondents. The lack of an appropriate platform or the unwillingness of the institution to spend money on an appropriate one were highlighted as specific challenges related to this.

Funding - specifically ‘inadequate levels’, a ‘lack of national funding’, or ‘impetus from funding bodies’ - was highlighted as a challenge by respondents. The availability of third-party funds, particularly EC funding, was seen as a benefit of OE by one individual, however.

Lack of staffing resources was a major challenge, with ‘time constraints’ and lack of ‘time and priority’ of teaching staff cited as issues. Too many priorities for limited non-teaching staff resources and a ‘lack of dedicated staff time’ were cited more generally.

‘Synergies’ and ‘reducing unnecessary work’ were among the other comments made by individual respondents that highlighted the benefits of OE in relation to resourcing.

2.7.3. Visibility & awareness

Visibility and awareness was another a theme that consistently came through in respondents' answers about both benefits and challenges (Table 5).

	Benefit	Challenge
Of staff	7	
Among staff / students	3	10
Of institution	3	1
Of OER	1	2
General	3	8
Other	6	

Table 5: Key benefits and challenges identified by respondents relating to visibility and awareness

The possibility that OE and OER can increase the profile of academic staff was the most consistent way in which visibility and awareness was chosen as a benefit, with respondents highlighting 'international recognition', 'larger audience for their work' and 'increased visibility of quality outputs from our teachers'. In addition, some individual respondents highlighted the awareness it created of the institution itself, and in the 'other' category, individual respondents highlighted awareness of the library, for students, for science and Open Access principles.

However, the lack of awareness of OE and OER were generally major challenges, specifically among staff and students. Respondents specified a lack of awareness among 'researchers and teachers', 'in the field of education', the management of an institution, or among the 'university community' more widely. Respondents also highlighted that this remained the case 'despite our best ongoing efforts of education and awareness'.

2.7.4. Access & reach

Another theme which consistently came through as a major benefit was improved access to materials and the expanded reach that OER facilitates grant (Table 6).

	Benefit	Challenge
Students	10	1
Third mission	9	
Teaching staff	3	1
General access	6	
Other	6	

Table 6: Key benefits and challenges identified by respondents relating to access and reach

The primary consideration was that promoting OE meant that students could better access educational materials. Respondents highlighted that 'open materials are accessible to students throughout the learning process' and there allowed 'equitable access for students...[with] no

limited number of user licences per eBook’ or ‘use OER on many devices’. One respondent highlighted ‘an aspirational benefit is around offering a wide choice of easily accessible teaching materials to students and staff (i.e. by encouraging staff to embed OER in reading lists)’

Additionally, a large number of respondents made points relating to the ‘third mission’ of higher education institutions, i.e. the need for economic and social responsibility to wider communities. OE materials offer ‘easy’ and ‘better access for all users’. Institutions receiving public money should embrace the public domain and promote ‘broader access to education’ through OE. Respondents highlighted that ‘High accessibility increases the impact of our ideas among our audience’, and OE promotes ‘democracy to knowledge’ and ‘reduces barriers to education’.

Respondents also highlighted the benefits of access for teaching staff, often in connection to student benefits. Specific points made by individual respondents included accessibility in reviewing textbooks, support for distance education and inclusive publishing.

2.7.5. Skills & knowledge

Skills and knowledge related to OE was another theme that consistently came through in respondents' answers about both benefits and challenges (Table 7).

	Benefit	Challenge
Knowledge exchange	5	
General skills & knowledge	5	9
Digital skills	1	3
Other	3	

Table 7: Key benefits and challenges identified by respondents relating to skills and knowledge

Knowledge exchange prompted by OE and OER was the major theme identified, with respondents specifying ‘peer to peer feedback with faculty and content experts’, the ‘wider dissemination of knowledge’ and ‘the creation of innovative learning solutions’ as benefits.

Digital skills and the lack of information literacy were cited as challenges and the difference between electronic and traditional materials, specifically textbooks. One respondent did highlight that a benefit of OE had been ‘improving digital and information literacy skills’.

The lack of knowledge and skills in an institution was highlighted as a major challenge by several respondents, although the opportunity for staff to upskill and develop new skills was highlighted as a benefit by some others.

Specific topics raised by just one respondent were Open Science skills and diversifying the support libraries can offer.

2.7.6. Legal questions

Legal questions were a common challenge - respondents specifically mentioned licenses, copyright, intellectual property, as well as 'legal insecurities felt by staff members'. One stated, 'It is tricky to remix resources in multimedia educational content, and it discourages experts, sometimes'.

2.7.7. Policy

The status and existence, or non-existence of policy was another challenge. The lack of policy was cited, as was the lack of a direct or formal OE / OER policy at institutional and national levels. Respondents highlighted the lack of vision, supporting infrastructure, and guidance. One respondent highlighted that the anticipated introduction of an approach nationally in 2025 will make a difference; another highlighted that the inclusion of OE in the institution's education and open science policies had been a major benefit.

2.7.8. Science & research

The relationship of OE to science and research was another theme, most consistently to Open Access, Open Data, Data sharing and other elements of the Open Science movement. The lower recognition of OE than Open Science was chosen as a challenge by a small number of respondents. Still, the support and connection with Open Science was much more commonly seen as a benefit.

2.7.9. Leadership

Organisational leadership was flagged by some respondents as a problem area. A lack of institutional commitment and support, little interest from leadership, and bureaucracy were the main issues raised. One respondent highlighted that a decision-making working group had made a difference to OE and OER support in their institution.

2.7.10. Quality

Quality was highlighted as a major challenge by almost the same number of respondents who raised it as a major benefit. Quality of open education and its materials is seen as a benefit of OE but there are also concerns over the perceived poor quality of OE materials (when compared to traditional teaching materials). This can stand in the way of promoting the use or development of OER.

2.7.11. Understanding of education

Some respondents highlighted that OE had changed the way that higher education was conceived in their institution and how it was understood. Respondents flagged adaptation, novel ideas for teaching, new ways of looking at old materials, and serendipity in materials as ways in which this had been achieved.

2.7.12. Other

Some other points raised as benefits by respondents were:

- independence from commercial software
- permanence over time
- transparency
- being part of a movement

Additional challenges they raised were:

- publishers
- difficulty in taking positions
- platforms not promoting openness
- the focus on AI

2.8. OTHER DETAILS

At the end of the survey, respondents were offered the chance to provide any additional information or details in a free text form. A total of 17 respondents took this opportunity, highlighting a range of issues and providing additional information on their experiences and approaches towards OE and OER.

These comments provide a rich additional source of commentary on the survey results. They highlight progress made, as well as the cultural challenges and broader hurdles faced by those supporting and promoting OE. With some minor corrections and personally-identifying information removed, a few of the most important insights are collected below:

The knowledge and infrastructure for supporting OER are in place. The greatest challenge now is to get the education sector enthusiastic about using/reusing, sharing, and co-developing OER, and to convince the board and management of the usefulness of and need for policy regarding this topic.

It's still early beginnings, especially at universities and university libraries, but there is a movement and it's accelerating.

Student engagement and co-creation is an important aspect of... support for OER and open education. The [service] supports a number of courses that incorporate OER

creation assignments... We work together with students on a range of open education projects.

Without formal policies, plans and strategies, incentives and rewards, there is still a lot of OER available via different channels.

There is no institutional policy on OE. The Library collaborates in the development of open materials to support teaching and learning. We also manage the Institutional Repository where the materials produced by the academic staff...are stored and spread.

Higher education courses have been available to people outside the higher education institutions...for several decades, within open universities, so OE does not really offer much added value...

It would have been interesting to have some cross-links between Open Education (OER) and Open science (Open archives) since higher education institutions are basically and simultaneously concerned by education and research

We are starting to open the dialogue with OS and OA colleagues to see if, by connecting the dots, we can advance together for the benefit of all. MOOCs are still our privileged field of experimentation and piloting with OER and we intend to continue moving further.

3. CONCLUSIONS

3.1. RESPONSES & RESPONDENTS

The annual survey of higher education institutions conducted by SPARC Europe continues to highlight progress in support for OE and OER, and their adoption across Europe.

The survey received a good response rate of well over 100 respondents, which is over 10% of the European University Association membership. Efforts to support and develop OE and OER are widely spread across Europe, with consistent themes emerging in how OE is supported, the resources deployed, and the benefits and challenges of doing so.

However, the response rate was a reduction on the number of responses from 2022, although this reduction was almost entirely due to a reduction from Spain where changes in key staff during the window of the survey coincided with a period of intense activity for libraries involved with a research accreditation process. This challenge alone highlights themes emerging from the survey results, specifically the continued dependence of OER and OE on skilled and engaged individuals, the importance of networks and robust communication channels, and the pressure on the capacity of institutional staff with multiple (sometimes competing) responsibilities.

Most respondents are in libraries, with a large proportion holding roles with 'library' or 'librarian' in the title, although libraries were less likely to take a lead role than other departments. Prior year surveys were specifically targeted at academic libraries, and these continue to provide the majority of respondents this year; responses were encouraged from other departments. What emerges is consistent but nuanced from prior years' findings. The library holds a position of importance in the spread of OE, often taking a lead role, using the skills and experience of its staff to offer support and raise awareness. However, the involvement of other departments - notably education and technology services and faculty themselves - is notable and is the basis for the provision of support services in areas outside the core responsibilities of the library. Delivering Open Education policy and practice is clearly a collaborative undertaking.

3.2. KEY THEMES EMERGING

Respondents shed light on the dual nature of OE and OER's impact. OE and OER have helped many institutions create a collaborative, sharing culture, but other respondents continue to struggle with resistance and lack of buy-in at their institutions. Visibility and awareness of OE and OER among institutional staff and leadership prevents more institutions from supporting OE & OER more actively; yet OE and OER can benefit staff, students, institutions and (in some cases) individual departments by creating greater visibility of their work and materials.

Resource constraints, including funding and staffing, along with uncertainties around licensing and intellectual property rights, are prominent challenges. A lack of funding or sufficient staff capacity were highlighted by a number of respondents, as was uncertainty around licensing, copyright and intellectual property among teaching staff as holding back progress. However, if these challenges are overcome, respondents highlight that OE and OER are helping them to ensure resources are accessible to wider groups, spreading the benefits created beyond the organisation that is producing them.

A notable difference is that the two biggest issues which informed the 2022 survey and (thus partly by definition) responses to it - the COVID-19 pandemic the incorporation of the UNESCO OER Recommendations. The impact of the pandemic was still apparent in 2022, as was awareness and implementation of the UNESCO recommendations. The 2023 survey did not specifically ask about these two issues, as the 2022 survey did, and none of the respondents raised them in their free text responses on the key benefits, key challenges, reasons for skill gaps, or other topics that they considered relevant. The absence of these two issues from the responses suggests their impact is less significant than was previously thought, or sufficient time has passed that the impact has been absorbed into the background noise of broader trends and considerations.

3.3. THE NATURE OF SUPPORT

Survey respondents offer positive indications on growth in the cohort of those providing support as measured by the number of FTE and the level of experience of those providing support as measured by their number of years of experience). However, only a few respondents are based in institutions where seed funding or grant programmes supporting OE exist, and the mechanisms in place as part of these schemes are diverse and rarely focused directly on OE. Library budgets are the predominant source of support for OE and OER, although institutional budgets, national and European funding also play a role. Lack of funding and resources are consistently highlighted as key challenges in further progressing OE and OER, and this is a limiting factor in seeing more innovation and adoption.

The nature of the services offered can often be influenced by copying what institutions are doing or emerging from networks in which respondents participate. These services are rarely branded as 'Open Education support' but are embedded within wider topics, such as Open Science or Digital Skills. Based on survey responses, OE is around three times as likely to be incorporated into an institution's broader stack of policies than it is in a standalone OE policy. This is mostly due to the prevalence of Open Science policies (particularly in Finland) which incorporate OE as one of their strands of activity and responsibility, but also policies that have a broader Education focus than just OE. This position is mirrored in task forces with a focus on OE, which are four times as likely to be broadly focused than they are to have a standalone OE focus.

Copyright and Open licensing, Information literacy and Training / Education are the most common areas of support, each provided by over 70% of respondents and irrespective of which department they are based in. Respondents highlighted across the board that they had a full set of skills or many skills in the areas in which they provided support (including OER co-creation, managing repositories and discovery services), with gaps often attributable to dependence on third parties or other departments in their institution.

There are other signs of progress since last year, with more institutions having policies in place than in previous years and more implementing policies, developing task forces, and seeking ways to incentivize participation in OE & OER and promote diversity and equality in practice, often via institution-wide programmes. Examples provided included OE and OER set as criteria on assessments of internal project proposals or evaluation of performance, inclusion of OER in guide to career pathways and institutional awards including recognition of OE / OER.

Finally, survey results highlight the range and value of different networks and other projects through which OE and OER are promoted. Nearly forty different national and international entities named by respondents are involved in the promotion and support of OE or OER in some form - and many of these entities were named multiple times. Some have a formalised coordination role to play in their national education and / or research ecosystems, although many others are simply providing fora staff at higher education institutions to learn and exchange knowledge about OE. This remains critical for further progress in OE and OER.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

This report primarily seeks to report the findings of the 2023 survey and, as such, does not have many specific recommendations targeted at policymakers or those supporting OE and OER. We hope that its findings are of interest and find resonance with them, and can help them in developing plans and priorities. The following recommendations emerge from this report, although readers are encouraged to prioritise actions based on their reading of the survey responses and their own institutional contexts.

- Promote awareness and visibility of OE and OER among leadership and staff to encourage and sustain greater adoption and support, emphasising the importance of dedicated resources and depth of experience among institutional staff.
- Facilitate discussion between institutions at different stages in the development of OE and OER, recognising that the challenges institutions face early on in the process are often those which have been overcome by institutions more advanced in the field and whose experience can demonstrate the related benefits that OE and OER bring.
- Seek connections between different networks promoting OE, especially those with formal roles to play in OE development and those with wider remits seeking to facilitate discussion. This type of dialogue will help to spread advocacy and promotion of OE and OER beyond still-limited groups. Bringing together staff in different roles and departments within institutions will also help build on the strength of support within the library community and link it to other movements and groups.
- Grow OE in higher education with policies and task forces at the institutional level, incorporating incentives, recognition and rewards to overcome cultural challenges. There is space for innovation and experimentation, adapting and building on practices already in place at institutions with more advanced OE & OER programmes.

Appendix A - Methodology

This study consisted of an online survey open for nine weeks from 21 November 2023 to 26 January 2024. It was distributed to academic librarians and other staff of higher education institutions and academic libraries across Europe through the SPARC Europe and ENOEL networks and organisations, such as [LIBER](#), [IFLA](#), [OE Global](#), [Creative Commons](#), [OCLC](#), [ICDE](#), [REBIUN](#), [the Network of Open Orgs](#) and [CSUC](#).

While previous surveys in 2021 and 2022 were directly targeted to library staff, discussions with those responsible for advancing OE and OER highlighted that this meant the survey was bypassing responsible staff in institutions where the library was not directly involved in OE or did not take the lead. When it did make its way to them, it was not always easy for them to answer questions directed at a library. As such, questions have been redesigned to accommodate a wider range of respondents.

The online platform SurveyMonkey was used for survey design, dissemination and information gathering. The questionnaire was designed with optional and mandatory questions, the latter reserved for critical information or responses which determined later question logic. Some were multiple choice, others based on Likert scales, and others offering respondents an open text field. The number of responses to each question varied, with the total number of responses to each question indicated in the caption (e.g. n=127).

Data has been extracted from the SurveyMonkey platform in Excel format and analysed in Excel and Tableau in order to facilitate appropriate manipulation and visualisation. 116 responses were analysed from an initial total of 127 responses, with 11 responses excluded for lacking meaningful responses, coming from outside Europe or from entities that were not higher education institutions or academic libraries.

Consideration of duplicate responses

A total of 30 duplicate responses were received from 14 research institutions; of these, 9 were excluded from the final dataset because they were exact duplicates because they were empty of content, or because the respondent provided very limited detail in their response due to their position in the organisation.

This left a total of 16 duplicate responses from eight institutions.

These responses have been retained in the final dataset, although not every respondent answered every question. The following points of interest arise from an analysis of the duplicate responses, in each case echoing broader themes from this analysis:

- In every case, at least one of the respondents was in the Library. Three of the duplicate respondents came from Education Services, two from Faculty, and in three more cases both respondents were from the library, but from different teams within the library, as can be ascertained from individual roles - ie 'Student Engagement and Teaching Librarian', 'Digital Learning Librarian', 'Information specialist', 'Head of library services'

- Duplicate respondents were aware of the work of other departments, highlighting this when asked about the roles of other departments.
- Where Education Services and the Library both provided responses, Education Services always played the lead role; when the duplicate respondents were both based in the library, there were a range of responses, including 'a supporting role', 'we do not have a role', and 'we are still deciding'. The few faculty providing a duplicate response do not have a formal role.
- All respondents provide services on Information Literacy and many provide Training & Education. Library respondents focused on Advice on copyright, Collection management, Discovery service and Management and storage services. Respondents in Education Services provide Course pack provision, Creation of open textbooks, and OER co-creation. Respondents were consistent in their assessment on the level of skills they had available to deliver services.
- There was inconsistency regarding the existence of task forces and OE policies. Some respondents answered 'Don't know', 'Under development' or 'No' to these questions, while other respondents from their institution answered 'Yes' (and sometimes provided a link to the policy in question). There was no such inconsistency with regard to grant or seed funding, where answers were consistent with each other, excepting an occasional 'Don't know' from one of the respondents.
- Duplicate respondents highlighted different networks and projects of which they individually were active (or did not provide full answers to this question.) highlighting the range of projections engaging different staff.

Appendix B – List of respondents

Aarhus University
Åbo Akademi University
Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava
Agence bibliographique de l'enseignement supérieur (Abes)
AGH University of Krakow
Akademia Bialska im. Jana Pawła II
Arcada University of Applied Sciences
Brno University of Technology
Ca' Foscari University of Venice
Comenius University
Conservatorio di Musica di Brescia
Cracow University of Technology
Dragomanov Ukrainian State University
Dublin Business School
Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology
École polytechnique
Erasmus University
Gdansk University of Technology
Glasgow Caledonian University
Häme University of Applied Sciences (HAMK)
HAN University of Applied Sciences
Harokopio University of Athens
Helsinki University
Higher Institute of Accounting and Administration of Coimbra
Jan Kochanowski University
Juraj Dobrila University
Kadir Has University
KU Leuven
Lapland University
Laurea University of Applied Sciences
Leibniz Information Centre for Economics (ZBW)
Leibniz Information Centre for Science and Technology (TIB)
Leibniz Institute for Research and Information in Education
Lib4RI
Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts
Maastricht University
Masaryk University
Matej Bel University

Medical University of Lodz
Medical University of Gdansk
Nicolaus Copernicus University
Oles Honchar Dnipro National University
Politecnico di Milano
Radboud University
Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences
Silesian University of Technology
Slovak Centre of Scientific and Technical Information
Slovak University of Technology
Sumy State University
Swiss Federal Institute of Sport Magglingen SFISM
Swiss Federal University for Vocational Education and Training
Tampere University
Technical University in Zvolen
The Royal Danish Library
Tomsk State University
Turku University of Applied Science
UiT - Arctic University of Norway
Ukrainian State University of Science and Technologies
UNIR - Universidad Internacional de La Rioja
Università di Torino
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona
Université Bordeaux Montaigne
Université Bretagne Sud
Université de Genève
Université de Genève (UNIGE)
Université de Montpellier
Université de Nantes
Université de Reims Champagne-Ardenne
Université de Versailles Saint-Quentin
Université Paris Cité
University College Dublin
University Library of Bern (UB)
University of Agriculture in Kraków
University of Alicante
University of Bologna
University of Eastern Finland
University of Edinburgh
University of Glasgow
University of Graz

University of Groningen
University of Jyväskylä
University of Konstanz
University of Leeds
University of Lodz
University of Macedonia
University of Modena and Reggio Emilia
University of Padua
University of Piraeus
University of Sheffield
University of Split
University of Turku
University of Vienna
University of Zadar
Utrecht University
Uzhhorod National University
Vytautas Magnus University
Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW)