

2015

Romanian Institute for
Adult Education

Maria Toia



Regional Analysis Report IREA, Romania

Open Educational Resources uptake in adult education



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

THE OERup! CONSORTIUM





TABLE OF CONTENT

INTRODUCTION.....	3
1. Methodology.....	4
2. OER for adult education in the regional/national context.....	5
3. Current implementation of OER in adult education in the regional context.....	7
3.1. Perception and attitudes.....	7
3.2. OER usage and practice.....	8
3.3. Availability and quality of OER.....	8
3.4. Barriers and drivers for the use of OER.....	9
3.5. Impact of OER use in adult education institutions.....	10
4. Recommendations for the development of the training package to support the use of OER for adult education stakeholders.....	10
4.1. Need for training and recommendations for training content.....	10
4.2. Content of the training.....	11
4.3. Format of the training and ways of organising learning.....	11
5. Conclusions and further recommendations.....	12
Bibliography.....	13
Legal Notice.....	14

INTRODUCTION

This country report presents the data collected during the need analysis carried out by the Romanian partner IREA – Romanian Institute for Adult Education, on the use of OER in adult education.

As a research institute in the field of adult education, IREA aims to provide scientific and methodological support for all adult education institutions in Romania and to establish the link between the academics and practitioners in adult learning area. The overall research aim is to improve the quality of the education for adults, and to identify ways to enhance their ongoing participation in learning, and also for strengthening the lifelong learning dimension both at individual and institutional level.

Two of the main research directions within IREA, professionalization of adult educators and impact of new media on adult learning, provide the link for the integration of open education topic into the institute's current development and innovation work.

The need analysis conducted within the OERup! project illustrates the status quo on the current use and development of OER in adult education. Also, the purpose of the need analysis was to map existing policies on OER at a national, regional and European level, as well as to identify training needs of adult education staff in relation to the use of OER in their teaching and educational practice.

All statements are based on the results of qualitative research. Whilst making no pretence to being an extensive scientific study, this report provides a useful overview of the current situation.

1. Methodology

Up to 6 semi-structured interviews were conducted with adult learning professionals, institutional decision makers and experts from adult education. The purpose of the interviews was to explore the current use and development of OER in the educational practice of the interviewees, as well as to identify their specific training needs in relation to OER development. In addition, a round table workshop was organized to explore the main drivers and barriers identified during the interviews, which also allowed participants to provide input for the development of the OERup! training package.

Semi-structured interviews in Romania:

IREA conducted 6 interviews during February 2015, 2 of the interviews being conducted face to face, 2 via Skype and 2 were returned in written form. The profile of the participants covers two language trainers from a private training center, two academic staff members from a local university, one manager of a youth NGO, one freelance trainer that provides soft skills training to private companies.

Roundtable in Romania:

The round table workshop took place in the beginning of March with the participation of 10 adult learning professionals and managers. The participants were representatives of NGOs, private training centers and university. The key points for discussion were discussions around the interview findings and analysis of the quality criteria for the development of the training package.

2. OER for adult education in the regional/national context

At the moment we cannot speak about a consolidated frame for the implementation of OER in Romania (Burloiu et al., 2014). Romania appears active in the OER movement mainly through initiatives by institutions/groups and engaged individuals as well as through specific projects or programmes (Holotescu, C., 2012).

Even though not yet concretised, there are also initiatives at government level that can create a promising perspective for the implementation of OER. One example is the Government Programme for 2013-2016 adopted in December 2012 that specifies that the Ministry of Communications and the Ministry of Education will collaborate to support the innovative integration of Web2.0 and Open Educational Resources in education (Holotescu et al., 2014).

So far, the existing initiatives, projects and available resources are focusing almost exclusively on higher education and school education, with little or no focus on adult education. To better illustrate the current situation, it is worth looking at the OER and OEP examples provided in the POERUP Report for Romania (Holotescu, C., 2012):

1. Open materials (especially for the pre-university system) and discussions for validation / adaptation of the materials in online communities:

- <http://forum.portal.edu.ro>
- <http://didactic.ro>
- <http://e-scoala.ro>
- <http://www.dascali.ro>

2. The University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine Bucharest <http://en.usamv.ro> is a partner in the project Organic Balkanet <http://www.organic-balkanet.eu>, which developed Organic.Edunet <http://portal.organic-edunet.eu>, a learning portal that provides access to OER on Organic Agriculture and Agroecology.

3. iTeach <http://iteach.ro> - online community of over 8500 teachers, sharing educational resources and practices; iTeach publishes also an open journal (<http://iteach.ro/experiencedidactice>) - <http://www.oer-quality.org/iteach-a-teacher-training-programme-for-the-xxi-century> .

4. The Centre for Innovation in Education (TEHNE Romania) <http://www.tehne.ro> is an organization aiming to support educational initiatives through projects and programs

covering areas of e-learning, ICT in education, curriculum development, education for democratic citizenship, lifelong learning, and in-service teacher training.

5. Cirip.eu (<http://cirip.eu>) is an educational multimedia microblogging platform, hosting online / blended courses on new educational technologies, open to Social Media platforms for using/sharing/creating/recreating (little) OER, gathering an educational community around learning scenarios.

6. Siveco (<http://siveco.ro>) and Unisoft (<http://unisoft.ro>) are two Romanian software companies participating in the project Open Discovery Space: A socially-powered and multilingual open learning infrastructure to boost the adoption of eLearning resources <http://opendiscoveryspace.eu>.

7. The Romanian Open Access community portal <http://www.acces-deschis.ro/en> is a website aimed to bring more insight into the Open Access publishing models and to open new directions in Romanian research and development. The expected audience are researchers, scholars, university and high school teachers, university librarians, research librarians, archivists, and all those who work in the information science field.

8. Kosson (<http://kosson.ro>) is a portal about open access and new techniques and technologies for data communication and management, published under a CC license. It is dedicated to Romanian specialists in the field of information science (documentary, archives, library, museum curators, etc.), to eGovernment sector specialists, to students, and to general public. Founding Kosson community members are supporters and signatories of the Budapest Declaration on Open Access Initiative. In November, 2012, Kosson organized an international workshop on Open Access, at University "Transilvania" of Brasov <http://kosson.ro/resurse-profesionale/124-cultura-informatiei/653-abordari-inovatoare-promovare-acces-deschis-cultura-informatiei>.

9. An important number of Romanian libraries have signed the Agreement of Open Access <http://startad.kosson.ro/> , <http://www.kosson.ro/acces-deschis/50-despre-promovare-acces-deschis/650-accesul-deschis-si-bibliotecile>,<http://www.slideshare.net/kosson/valorificarea-cercetarii-europene> .

10. Romanian Encyclopedia <http://enciclopediaromaniei.ro> is published under a CC license.

11. Veioza Arte <http://veiozaarte.ro> is a video sharing platform acting as an open source production house for the Romanian cultural scene.

12. Sound Supradose <http://www.soundsupradose.com> and Local Records <http://www.localrec.ro> are collections of audio products under a CC license.

According to Pavel et al. (2014) there are very good examples of grass root initiatives and projects with huge potential of becoming OER, which share the same philosophy behind OER but fail in attributing a licence for the created resources. The tendency is to focus on the proprietary products since the open concept has not yet been put on the agenda.

The situation of OER in adult education is far from being a positive one. More advocacy and awareness raising, targeted towards decision makers, is needed. There are plenty of resources created by adult education institutions (for example LLP projects) who are interested in redistributing but do not have the capacity and knowledge to promote the materials, which are lost and forgotten because of the lack of policy and practice in the field.

The use of OER in adult education is closely connected to the digital competence of adult learning professionals. The national standards for the occupation of “trainer” do not comprise any specific competence unit for digital knowledge but there are recommendations (Holotescu, C., 2007) for teachers training programmes to include topics related to OER, new licenses and tools to create educational materials in a collaborative manner.

3. Current implementation of OER in adult education in the regional context

3.1. Perception and attitudes

The general opinion is that open educational resources play an important role in improving the quality of content and delivery in adult education. From the management point of view, OER means accessing new resources without spending a lot of time and money.

The innovative aspect of the OER, the fact that they use authentic material is another important aspect. Adult educators are dealing with a group of learners that need to access updated and ready to use information. The constant renewal of OER ensures a greater variety and more suitability to the use of these resources in teaching adults.

Also, the interviewees believe that OER are not only useful and appropriate but absolutely necessary for their activities, as stated by one educator: *“The main reason is a little bit selfish: there is a lot of good stuff all over the internet, made by great educators and from their experiences. Sometimes I don’t have the time to build my own resources or sometimes I*

didn't think of a different perspective. So that's why I heavily rely on the others' knowledge, altruistic enough to share their work."

3.2. OER usage and practice

The managers of adult education institutions reported that in cases where there is no explicit institutional policy, the use of OER depends very much on the trainer's approach. Those who are coordinating training activities often make suggestions for content approaches by sharing different OER.

OER are used in order to plan, teach and facilitate the learning process. They are used in class but also sent to learners for independent learning (in language courses). The language trainer interviewed said that *"we do have a group where we share OER and suggest useful materials"* and *"there is a set of OER that I have been using regularly for several years now and that I can rely on"*.

On the same time, interviewees could not say that they have a specific OER approach in the educational practice. They try to find the best content that suits their purposes or integrate better to a particular context (teaching, training and planning): *"Since they are already created I just search online repositories and take OER selectively to incorporate or adapt them into my own courses"*.

There are also examples of teachers who have started using OER some years ago and have advanced from the simple searching to now creating their own resources: *"My experience started with curiosity in 2006 when I opened my blog. At that time I wasn't familiar with the openness but without knowing I started to create my own digital resources for my courses, and make them available to others. Then I participated in a European project developing a course which included a unit about OER and OEP (at that time I think I was the first in Romania). Afterwards my interest grew and I wrote a lot of papers on this topic. Now I easily build courses around OER (all kinds of them to suit the syllabus topics)."*

3.3. Availability and quality of OER

The general opinion is that the access to open educational resources is rather easy. Participants of the need analysis said, that they mostly find the resources on their own. In addition, they find out about useful resources during teacher training events, conferences, or seminars. However, even if availability of OER is not a problem, adult learning professionals say that finding good quality and appropriate resources remains a time-

consuming responsibility of the user. Therefore the existence of automatic tools to select specific educational content would be very much needed.

Among the criteria used to assess quality of OER's the following have been mentioned:

- ✓ Usefulness
- ✓ Appropriateness for the intended learner
- ✓ Competences developed
- ✓ Specifying the age group and the level
- ✓ Useful exercises created alongside authentic material
- ✓ Relevance and applicability for specific needs and purposes
- ✓ Good organization and straightforwardness
- ✓ They have to provide accurate and updated information

Also, one of the experts believes that the majority of OER lack the academic standards, having a poor design that fails to make clear the concepts they are meant to illustrate. She adds *“for me the main criteria is the clarity of ideas and a good use of technology, especially audio and video (animation included)”*.

3.4. Barriers and drivers for the use of OER

None of the organisations involved in the need analysis have an explicit policy for the use of OER, which means that the creation, adaptation, sharing and using falls very much under the creativity and willingness of the professionals themselves. So to say, the efforts are concentrated only from one side (the professional's side) even though in the end the whole organisation (including learners) benefits from the efforts of those who struggle with the use of OER.

Awareness raising is mostly needed for organisations who maybe do not have an OER policy but have all stated that openness is not problem, rather the lack of promotion for OER at organisational level and maybe also the lack of knowledge for targeted business models. They also stated that this would influence the recognition and motivation for professionals (teachers, trainers, educators) who for now are mostly dealing with the issue on their own.

It has also been reported that OER for adult education are not promoted well enough, which automatically puts a barrier towards the usage, not necessarily because adult learning professionals are not interested, but mostly because there is still a lack of knowledge about OER and the added value they bring to the educational practice.

Another barrier emphasised regarding OER usage is the fact that *“some of them are only partly available and what initially seems to be an open resource proves to be restricted by a subscription and/or payment of a certain fee”*.

3.5. Impact of OER use in adult education institutions

All participants agreed that in the digital era we live nowadays OER are not only very useful, but they bring a lot of added value to the educational practice or teaching process. This is very well emphasised by one of the interviewees: *“The value lies in the innovative aspect they provide and the real life feeling they bring by using authentic material. In the cases where a textbook would be too mainstream or too out-dated, OER would provide the element of surprise in the classroom and would foster engagement within the group of learners”*.

Also, participants believe that OER bring a sense of availability and accessibility of resources that can now reach more people and have impact on a bigger scale.

Very specific opinions were expressed by representatives of NGO's and higher education. While for the higher education environment the academic visibility (for those who create and share OER) is very important, NGO's who usually have limited financial capabilities and therefore the availability of free resources is crucial in their activity, especially for those who provide free training courses (for youngsters, disadvantaged adults etc.).

4. Recommendations for the development of the training package to support the use of OER for adult education stakeholders

4.1. Need for training and recommendations for training content

All participants of the need analysis (both interviews and roundtable workshop) have unanimously stated that they need additional training on OER and are very open to take advantage of the training course offered within the OERup! project.

Otherwise they are quite comfortable with their level of using OER and have a strong motivation for using OER.

4.2. Content of the training

For institutional decision makers, experts and higher education staff, the development of OER policies, creation and promotion of OEP seems to be very important. Participants of the interview and roundtable workshops agree that this should be one of the main focuses in the development of the training package. They seem to be very open to learn how to use different tools and means that can contribute to raising awareness on OER and OEP in their own organisations.

Some participants believe that finding an appropriate resource depends a lot on the searching methods you use and therefore searching for OER's should be an important part of the training. One participant states *"It can be really daunting not to find the necessary resource in an appropriate time, and you can easily give up when all the materials you find are unsuitable for your teaching purpose"*. Another participant says *"Sometimes I am anxious if I cannot find the source – for eg if a video isn't clearly under a CC license and if I cannot be in contact with the creator – shall I use it or not?"*

Creating, adapting authentic material for classroom purposes, as well as selecting OER is of high interest for the participants in the need analysis. In addition, some mentioned the importance of mastering software applications when talking about creating own resources.

4.3. Format of the training and ways of organising learning

For the type of training offered within the OERup! project participants find the blended learning approach definitely suitable. Their preferred format of the training means a 8-10 hours course, with a percentage of 70% online training and 30% face to face activities.

Project based and group work seems to be the most preferred among the interviewed participants. When it comes to online vs. face to face, almost all participants stated that self-directed and project based fit best for the online part, while collaborative and group assignments are preferred for the face to face training.

5. Conclusions and further recommendations

- there is no policy frame to support the implementation of OER and OEP in adult education
- at the moment there are only grass root initiatives and projects that focus almost exclusively on higher education and school education, with very little impact on adult education
- there is little awareness, not only at policy level, but also among adult education institutions and professionals, therefore advocacy is needed for decision makers and amongst the adult learning community
- there are plenty of resources (LLP projects) that have the potential to become valuable OER's, but institutions and professionals lack the knowledge and capacity to promote them
- those professionals who use OER in their educational practice give full recognition to OER
- there is a general opinion that training on OER and OEP is very much needed
- the main key points for the training development are: creating resources, raising awareness at institutional level and developing business models.

For further information on OERup!, please check out our website: www.oerup.eu

and join our google+ community to exchange experience as well as information on relevant initiatives, studies, or platforms: plus.google.com/u/0/communities/109090515452084003343

Bibliography

Holotescu, C. (2007). *Technical Requirements of Educational Software Report*. Retrieved from <http://www.scribd.com/doc/189255399/Recommendations-for-Ministry-of-Education-related-to-Open-Educational-Resources-and-Practices>.

Holotescu, C. (2012). *OER in Romania*. Report in *POERUP project: Policies for OER uptake*. Retrieved from <http://poerup.referata.com/wiki/Romania> (10.02.2015)

Holotescu, C., Grosseck, G., Cretu, V., Danciu, E. 2014. *The power of the three words and one acronym: OER vs OER*. Subtitle: I'm not an Ogre of the Enchanted Realm (of cyberspace). I'm an Omnipresent Educational Rescuer (because I use the OER!). 6th World Conference on Educational Sciences, WCES, 6-9 February 2014. Retrieved from [https://www.academia.edu/6255197/The power of the three words and one acronym OER vs OER. Subtitle I m not an Ogre of the Enchanted Realm of cyberspace . I m an Omnipresent Educational Rescuer because I use the OER](https://www.academia.edu/6255197/The_power_of_the_three_words_and_one_acronym_OER_vs_OER_Subtitle_I_m_not_an_Ogre_of_the_Enchanted_Realm_of_cyberspace_I_m_an_Omnipresent_Educational_Rescuer_because_I_use_the_OER) (20.02.2015)

Pavel Burloiu, V., Chirvase, T., Manolea, B., Voicu, O. et alia 2014. *Ghid de bune practici RED*. Retrieved from <http://www.acces-deschis.ro/ro/oer/69-ghid-de-bune-practici-privind-resursele-educationale-deschise> (13.02.2015)

Pavel, V., Manolea, B., Bucur, A., Voicu, O., & Constantinescu, N. (2014). OER: Policy and best practices from Romania. In Conference Proceedings of "eLearning and Software for Education" (eLSE)

Legal Notice



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

This work has been funded with support from the European Commission. It reflects the views only of the author, and the European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

