UNESCO and the Government of Slovenia organizing the 2nd World Open Educational Resources (OER) Congress, Ljubljana, Slovenia, 18 – 20 September 2017

The Government of Slovenia / Ministry of Education, Science and Sport is co-organizing with UNESCO the 2nd World Open Educational Resources (OER) Congress. This is the result of the Slovenian approach of holistically adopting open education. The congress is the latest activity in a series of efforts to mainstream OER. Beginning in 2013, with recognition of VideoLectures.Net as an outstanding example of creative and innovative e-Content, creating the OpeningupSlovenia initiative in 2014 and establishing a UNESCO Chair in OER in 2016. Open educational resources (OER) enable everyone to have free access to an endless body of knowledge, educational services and applications. For the first time each pupil, student or citizen can experience education with the best professors and teachers the world has to offer. Slovenia is fully committed and is taking actions to push forward the global agenda on OER.

The Congress: A step towards a global standard-setting policy instrument
The Congress will host more than 500 delegates from around 100 UNESCO Member States and will welcome more than 20 ministers of education or higher education. It is a milestone towards creating a “UNESCO Recommendation on OER”, a possible standard-setting instrument, serving as a central forum for governments coordinating the ethical, normative and intellectual issues of OER, fostering multidisciplinary exchange, projects and mutual understanding, towards a universal agreement on OER, defining benchmarks and mobilizing international opinion. The Congress is thematically centred on »OER for Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education: From Commitment to Action«, reflecting a strong focus on the role of OER in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG) of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The specific focus is to encourage member states to move “From Commitment to Action” in implementing OER within their educational system.

The Result of the Congress: the “Ljubljana OER Action Plan”
The delegates at the Congress will adopt the Ljubljana OER Action Plan. Slovenia has proposed and taken forward the Ljubljana OER Action Plan because it believes that global changes can occur only if we all work together towards a common goal. The action plan will present operational policy recommendations and function as a blueprint for 195 UNESCO Member States on how to operationally mainstream and implement OER within their educational systems and be part of the digital transformation. The action plan is built on the outcomes of the six OER Regional Consultations that took place from December 2016 to May 2017 around the world, inputs from the global community and will be further enhanced by inputs from the debates and discussions at the Congress itself.

Message 1: Slovenia’s role
In January 2014, the Government of Slovenia decided to carefully examine the possibilities open education along with OER could offer to its educational system. In
order to achieve a successful digital transformation of education and a meaningful impact with valuable results, a comprehensive approach had to be developed and applied. This required establishing a cultural ethos of “openness” and deploying a vision to explore innovative pedagogies and learning environments. The goal was to involve stakeholders in a step by step fashion discussing, researching, developing, implementing, testing, validating and sharing good practice on open education and “openness beyond education”. The approach became known as the OpeningupSlovenia Initiative. In piloting open education, Slovenia decided to take advantage of its size and the flexibility it stems from it.

**Message 2: The Slovenian commitment**

Slovenia is committed to taking forward the policy making process after the Congress conclusion and pushing forward the activities in the next two years towards the adoption of a possible UNESCO Recommendation on OER. Slovenia is proud of the path it has taken in modernizing education and wishes to encourage other nations to partner on concrete projects and initiatives. This is the only way to build a global environment which will give every individual a quality free education. Slovenia will continue taking the lead in the preparation of a "UNESCO Recommendation on OER" and mainstreaming OER globally, and function as a catalyst for change and is fully committed to step into action to make sure that the voices of all stakeholders: students, teachers, disadvantaged groups, elders, educational institutions, companies, IGOs and NGOs will be heard. Slovenia shares many of the global challenges reflected in the Congress such as multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-lingual environments and societies. Therefore, it is prepared to act as a global agent in connecting the interests of small and large countries, and regionally in the Western Balkan Region, in finding global solutions for inclusive and equitable education through the use of OER.

**Message 3: Slovenia’s capacity is in technology**

Slovenia thinks of open education as an umbrella term under which different understandings of open education can be accommodated. Open education goes beyond OER towards open research outputs to embrace strategic decisions, open science, open software, teaching and research methods, collaborations between individuals, institutions, businesses and recognition of non-formal learning and different ways of making content available and reusable. Through its active stakeholders’, Slovenia wishes to employ advanced and open technologies for OER and create endless potential for innovation, research and business, contributing to the modernization of all levels of education globally.

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