Open Med project
Mid-Term Evaluation Report
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1. INTRODUCTION

This document presents the mid-term external evaluation for the OpenMed project. This project aims at developing capacity in Open Education at strategic and practical level in partner countries in the South Mediterranean region (Morocco, Palestine, Egypt and Jordan), but furthermore, to promote Open Education across the partner countries inspiring the region towards adopting Open Educational Practices in Higher Education by supporting the development of projects, agendas, events, capacity building and policies.

The mid-term report aims at presenting a state of the arts overview in relation with the project outcomes, achievements and issues encountered during the first half of the project. It is important to consider that the aim of this project is to **raise awareness and facilitate the adoption of Open Educational Resources (OER) and Open Educational Practices (OEP) in the South-Mediterranean countries**, with a particular focus on higher education in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Palestine, therefore the outcomes, results and achievements not always are expressed as tangible objects, therefore the evaluation depends on observations and analysis.

The project, during its first half, has aimed to work collaboratively creating a culture of openness and transparency promoting the sharing of good practices, therefore, and alongside the ethos of this project, the role of the external evaluator has been to provide advice, guidance and feedback not only to the central management but also to the partner.

2. OBJECTIVES OF MID-TERM EVALUATION

The mid-term report provides an evaluation in relation with the WP1 - Compendium of EU-MED Open Education practices (Deliverable 1.1) and WP2 - Agenda of Open Education for university course development (Deliverable 2.3) - Institutional roadmap(s) of open educational practices, as an adaptation of the Agenda to the local, cultural and institutional framework (Deliverable 2.4), with the national forums (Deliverable 2.2) - and the project short term impact indicators.

This report aims at showcasing the process of evaluation and the results of the evaluation contemplating a wide range of dimensions including the organisation of the OER national forums in Egypt, Morocco, Jordan and Palestine aiming at ensuring the correct follow up of the agendas, some recommendations post-forums, the effectiveness of these, its impact within their direct communities and in the region, and also, on the quality and relevance of the activities of the aforementioned forums.

3. METHODOLOGY

For present external evaluation report the methods used to ensure the quality of the deliverables and forums are: Open peer reviewing the Regional Agenda and the Compendium, and by observing and participating in the national forums, or by in the case of not being able to attend, by following the notes and discussing with partners that have participated in such forums.

The key quality criteria evaluated for this project which have been adapted from the OECD Principles for Evaluation and from the Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management[1] are: **comprehensibility and clarity** in regards with the compendium and with the agenda and in relation with the national forums: **relevance, structure and impact**.

4. QUALITY REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT OUTCOMES

4.1 - WP1 - Compendium of EU-MED Open Education practices

For the compendium, the evaluation was made on an open peer-review basis, with the aim to support the editorial team and the partners contributing with the case studies towards ensuring that that it achieved the following quality criteria: **comprehensibility and clarity,** which include the subcategories of legibility and structure.

The feedback was provided by using a tool developed to provide detailed peer-review to the editors and to the partners (see Annex I). The aim of this tool was to have a direct mean of communication with the authors, providing feedback in the following categories: clarity of the language; grammar and style; clarity of the examples used; provision of further readings and structure.

This evaluation of the Compendium also covered the correspondence of the compendium with the objectives and aims described in the project plan and with its descriptors. The key evaluation questions for the compendium review can be described as follows.

Key Evaluation Question 1: Is the compendium easy to read both for the expert stakeholders, by the Open Education practitioners and by members of the public that are interested in Open Education?

Key Evaluation Question 2: Can the compendium raise awareness in managers and educators on the benefits and pitfalls of Open Education by showcasing the best practices to generate a reliable and evidence-based body of knowledge on OER in the region?

Key Evaluation Question 3: Can the compendium help to consolidate both the agenda and the roadmap and support the implementation of policies and agendas at regional, national and local level?

By giving the editing team comments for the compendium as a unit and per each of the sections, we could ensure that the authors received consistent feedback. At unit level, advice was given in regards with the structure, ensuring coherence amongst chapters, and

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[1] The *DAC Principles for the Evaluation of Development Assistance*, OECD (1991), Glossary of Terms Used in Evaluation, in 'Methods and Procedures in Aid Evaluation', OECD (1986), and the *Glossary of Evaluation and Results Based Management (RBM) Terms*, OECD (2000).

also, to ensure that the same standard of English was used across all the text to ensure its comprehensibility and legibility.

Some of the recommendations provided to the editors and authors can be summarised as follows:

1. The design needs to be reviewed at it is at times quite difficult to read, I recommend to simplify the layout, keeping the use of colours to the bare minimum and to ensure that the font is neat and clear in low and high resolution screens.

2. There needs to be a language cohesion, therefore, a careful proofreading is strongly suggested, as across the text it is easy to encounter "Americanisms" against British style of writing, and some typos. Also, as the text has been written by different stakeholders there is a lack of consistency in the structure of the sentences, the tone of the narratives and there are some grammar issues that need to be amended.

3. Also, it is necessary to have a consistent, thus clear style for the text. Footnotes should always include a guiding text (title, name, explanation) instead of a standalone link. In the case of the tables and figures, these need to have distinctive captions and their titles or descriptions.

4. It is important too to provide the reader with a table of content and a table of figures, at the very beginning of the text, to further orient the reader.

5. In relation with the summaries, both the executive and the final, I recommend to merge both into one section as some relevant information might be not considered or perhaps overlooked when placed in the appendix, as some people tend to ignore that section.

4.2 - WP2 - Agenda of Open Education for university course development

The evaluation of the agenda has been made by working alongside the management team, reviewing the text to ensure it is clear and transversal for all the partners towards to meet the vision behind the OER Regional Agenda: "Opening up education and sharing academic content may lead to improved networking, collaboration and integration of HEI systems, through comprehensive development and creation of a relevant interrelated platforms of content within and outside HEIs".

The evaluation criteria used for the review of the agenda are **comprehensibility and clarity** and the subcategories of coherence, structure and legibility.

The agenda has five dimensions, which has been reviewed before publication for public comment and discussion to ensure that each the partners can have a common space to exchange ideas. The dimensions and some of the feedback given prior to publication can be seen as follows:

1. Open Content & Licenses (C): When referring to Open Licenses it is important these not to be linked uniquely to Creative Commons as such are some of the Open Licences, because it is important to include Public Domain and GNU licenses in the case that some resources can be published as such, including works of art and software developed by the partners (platforms, code, systems).

2. Open Pedagogy & Practice (P): When referring to Open Pedagogy and Practice the review focused to ensure that readers share a common understanding of the concepts presented.

3. Technology (T): In relation with Technology, the review focused in clarify the main concepts towards that the partners agree to common grounds in relation with the equipment, the technology and with the platforms.

4. Governance & business models (G) In regards with the Governance & business models the review aimed at ensuring that the partner institutions share a common language when developing agendas, and also, when planning to implement strategies to embed Open Education in their institutions.

5. Collaborative models between institutions (I): In relation for collaborative models between institutions the feedback referred to the common grounds for collaboration towards establish partnerships that can widen up the impact that the project can have.

4.3 - Evaluation of the National Forums

Up to date there has been four national forums held to present the state of the arts of Open Education in each of the partner countries, each of the forums has been evaluated under the following criteria: **relevance, structure and impact**. Relevance refers to the significance of the themes discussed and the presentations made in relation with OpenMed's main objective; structure, refers to if the National Forums have followed the agendas prepared for the day, and impact refers to the scope of the presentations during the day considering that non-partners universities are invited to participate and also to the discussions amongst the participants in such forums.

Cairo University, Cairo: This forum, held in Cairo in November 2016, had participants not only from Cairo University, but also representatives of the government, other Egyptian universities, academics and students. The presentations held were from a wide range of initiatives, such as policies for online learning, e-learning services at the University, quality assurance for e-learning content, open scholarship and MOOCs presenting the audience with a wide scope of opportunities to open up in Egypt. The forum was considered relevant, as allowed policy makers, senior management, academics and students to exchange ideas, it was well structured, facilitating that the presentations had enough space to give room for reflection following the agenda's goals, however, due to the massiveness of Egypt's university system and because of the large scale of their e-learning remit, measuring impact at this stage is not viable, as due to the idiosyncrasy of their policies, it may take some more time for Open Education to permeate their actual system. The full report for this event as well as the recommendations given to the partners can be seen in annex II.

Cadi Ayyad University, Marrakech: This forum, held in Marrakesh in December 2016, had a wide range of participants from five Moroccan universities, which presented their current open education related projects alongside with the presentation of the compendium of case studies and the presentation of the regional agenda. In relation with the structure, this forum was conducted timely, allowing all the presenters to showcase their projects and allowing the public to ask question to get more information about what they were doing and the success of their initiatives. This event was relevant as it allowed an interesting exchange of ideas from various universities in the country, facilitating space for potential collaborations, which mean that the forum had an impact by allowing Moroccan and European scholar to understand what was going on outside their institutions and getting inspired to work together which led to develop the first approach for Moroccan scholars to jointly create a national declaration to support and promote Open Education. The full report for this event as well as the recommendations given to the partners can be seen in annex III.

Princess Sumaya University for Technology, Amman: This forum was held in February 2017 in Amman. The National strategy forum was well organised, and it was relevant in relation that allowed participants from various Jordanian universities and international partners to present they projects on Open and Distance learning including MOOCs. In relation with structure, the agenda was followed in an organised manner, as there was space for discussing and reflecting upon the different approaches in Open Education. In regards with impact, the participants agreed that it capacity building across the universities is core to open up education in the country as this issue was mentioned by the participant academics, therefore they share a common challenge that can be overcome by collaborating among each other. The full report for this event as well as the recommendations given to the partners can be seen in annex IV.

Birzeit University, Ramallah: The forum was held in Ramallah on April 2017. This forum was very nicely organised, and its relevance lays into giving space to share and exchange ideas for collaboration and for refection amongst partners from different institutions but also, collaborating with other units inside their own University, as if their libraries are developing Open Access, it is core to establish partnerships with these to ensure that the ethos and efforts are shared. Also, it was discussed that Universities have to share their principles about openness and that partner universities need to talk to those institutions that are not participating in this project to raise awareness in Open Education. In relation with the structure, the forum followed the agenda carefully and allowed discussion and reflection amongst the participants. In regards with the impact of this forum, it allowed to reach other units doing open-related activities in their institutions and allowed them to look for a strategy to persuade the government into supporting OEP at formal level The full report for this event as well as the recommendations given to the partners can be seen in annex IV.

5. REVIEW OF THE SHORT-TERM IMPACT COMMITMENTS

Short term impact	Progress up to date	Evaluation comments
South- Mediterranean HEIs take elements of openness approach in education into their current practices	HEI managers and educators from partners universities are leading towards developing agendas and strategies to promote Open Education, also, the forums have allowed other non-partner universities to share their projects, opening the door for collaboration amongst institutions towards adopting OEP.	So far it looks viable that the target: *Managers and educators awareness on benefits and pitfalls of openness in education increased by >20% above baseline by the end of the project* will be achieved.
South- Mediterranean HE Managers agree on a long term strategy to opening up education in the region	The national agenda is now live and open for discussion and one of the partner country is working to develop a national declaration for open education while another is on the first steps of developing their own declaration.	So far, the forums have had a wide representation of HE Managers, and the project is working towards ensuring the representing 30 different South-Mediterranean Universities adopt the agenda.
South- Mediterranean HE adopt a mid-term strategy for the	As each country has different needs and approaches a very comprehensive agenda has been developed and it is open for improvement and comments to set up common grounds for all the partner	The progress in this area is quite considerable so, it is indeed quite likely that the 30 roadmapping applications by South-Mediterranean HEIs will be

	universities, and from there each university can choose the format of their roadmaps depending of their own needs, which can be in the shape of a declaration, a policy, an agenda or an strategy among other options.	achieved in the expected times.
Implementation of OERs at institutional level, according to the long-term vision of the OER Agenda	The commitment of raising awareness in regards with Open Education is being made via the forums, so at the moment the institutions are reflecting in ways on how to embed OEP in their agendas and programmes, to achieve the mission of OpenMed	This is a commitment that needs reflection in each of the universities, and the forums are contributing to raise awareness towards having an effective impact affecting progressively the way in which the universities design their teaching paths, therefore the chance of having a wide adoption of OEP is quite likely.
Increased digital competences of educators	A network of champions and experts is leading on the development of content for an upcoming course in line with the project aims.	Once the course is ready, it is indeed quite feasible to achieve the objective of having *70 South-Mediterranean HEI educators are trained to the concept of openness in education*
Students are exposed to internationally-minded teachers and relevant flexible and up to date open contents	The forums have provided with evidence the adoption of OEP across partner countries, now it is necessary to make an effort to document this adoption in terms of reaching students.	For this commitment, it is necessary to develop a tool to gather evidence on the adoption of OEP and its impact in their teaching gathering feedback from the students, to have an indication towards ensuring that e*ach educator start-up 3 evidences of adoption of open practices; at least 50% includes adoption of OERs* in the short term.

6. MID-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

R1. It is important that the partners promote the discussion of the OpenMed agenda in their institutions, ensuring a transversal participation, from senior management to lecturers, first towards raising awareness and then to ensure that the agenda is finalised listening to wide range of voices.

R2. It is necessary that discussion and reflection among partners is improved as the activity if the mailing list is sometimes quite reduced and this may an impact in the way in which the different partners develop their agendas and roadmaps because some good ideas may not be shared.

R3. It is also important that the Forum organisers maintain and promote communication among those institutions that participated in their forums to ensure that roads for collaboration are open and to ensure that open education is widely adopted in their countries in a collaborative manner that can be sustainable after the end of this project.

R4. It is necessary to develop a tool to ensure that the partners have a shared place where to document their open practices and the impact it is having among students by gathering feedback about their experience, as a mean to record good practices that can be shared across all the countries in the region to ensure that the project has a wide impact, because the provision of good practices can lead to a further adoption of Open Educational Practices.

Annexes

1. The National Strategy Forum: General observations

The agenda of the day started with the note of President of Cairo University, Prof. Dr. **Gaber Nassar wh**o stated that "education is not limited to the childhood or to the classroom but goes beyond that to all life stages and across the place borders", confirming the importance of joint international projects, to "exchange experiences and knowledge and open up the prospect for continued cooperation to promote the concepts of Open learning and Open Resources based on availability, regardless of the limits of place and time".

His presentation was followed by Prof. Dr. Elsayed Tag Eldin, who introduced the activities of the Open Education Center, which is part of the national strategy of Open/Distance Education.

Lately Prof. Dr. Ismail Gomaa presented the national policies underlining the lack of innovation in the online programs, which emulate the traditional way highlighting that the way to overcome this challenge is to promote alternative approaches (e-learning and blended learning) which will largely improve make learning available without boundaries.

Then Prof. Dr. Ragia Aly Taha, the Vice President of the National Authority of Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Education in Egypt, presented about the Quality Assurance Mechanisms to ensure the Quality of Open Education and Open Educational Resources, followed by by Prof. Dr. Rami Iskander, Director of National E-learning Center who presented a session dedicated to the role of the Ministry of Higher Education and the Supreme Council of Universities to enhance the adoption of Open/distance education.

On the afternoon the sessions focused on presenting the OpenMed project, its achievements including the Compendium of case studies showcasing these from Egypt. The discussion moved towards a discussion around the OER Regional Agenda for the South-Mediterranean led by Cristina Stefanelli, coordinator of the OpenMed project at UNIMED. Subsequently, was video-presented by partners at Coventry University, showcasing the different case studies analysed in Egypt.

Afterwards, Dr. Maha Bali, associate professor of practice at the Center for Learning and Teaching at the American University in Cairo, discussed open scholarship and open pedagogy sharing with the audience her perspective of being an intentional open scholar and pedagogue and the techniques she uses to facilitate and teach open courses (e.g. DigiWriMo), (www.creativitycourse.org) including with the use of blogs and twitter.

The last presentation was given by Dr. Zeinab El Maadawi, from the Faculty of Medicine at Cairo University, on the use of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) in an Emerging Knowledge Society who stated that "The available open educational resources such as MOOCs, developed by leading universities, could be used, adapted and customised according to learners' needs, culture and context" explaining that MOOCs can be utilised either as a stand-alone model or be integrated in a blended learning.

2. Accomplishments

The agenda was carefully followed and the discussions insightful giving a good perspective of the projects in OE in the country, and also the advantages and challenges encountered, pointing towards ways to make advantages good practices and to overcome the challenges faced, such as large numbers of students in HE, with the support of Open Educational Practices.

3. Recommendations

It is recommended to support the development of Open Education in the country using the regional agenda as a tool for encouraging institutions to adopt these practices to enhance their HE institutions, as it could help these to overcome the challenges that having a large number of students my present for the logistics of teaching.

Annex II - Open Educational Resources (OER) National Strategy Forum: Cadi Ayyad University, Marrakesh

1. The National Strategy Forum: General observations

The National strategy forum was well organised, the agenda was followed in a precise and organised manner, there was space for discussion, reflexion and to present different approaches in Open Education.

On day one, the opening and welcoming messages were inspiring, as their focus was Open Education as a human right and a social duty. These were followed by the Presentation of OpenMed background information, which set up the boundaries of action and the roadmap of the project. Subsequently, The Compendium was presented, showcasing the different case studies.

Afterwards, a series of presentations were made which provided and insightful panorama of the state of the arts of Open Education in Morocco, which led to enhance the discussion around the regional agenda that was debated later on day 1. This discussion had a strong focus in the construction of a community of practice around Open Education, as this was understood as core to enhance the scope of the project and to promote the values and adoption of Open Educational Practices in Morocco, opening the door to the possibility of developing a National Declaration on Open Education, which was further discussed on day 2.

On Day 2, the conversation focused on the possibility and feasibility for the partners of start drafting a National Declaration, because as stated by one of the participants "*In certain moments there is important to have a chapeau of action, and will be important to have a common place where everyone (universities) can relate*" and also because "*If Moroccan universities share an open philosophy, Moroccan universities can reach excellence, by constructing upon each other work*". Therefore, and led by Khalid Berrada and Ahmed Almakari, the participants were involved process of starting the first draft of the Moroccan Open Education Declaration.

Day 2 concluded with a monitoring visit to the project by the National Erasmus+ Office in Morocco

2. Accomplishments

In relation with the aims and objectives of the forum, it can be said that each one of them was completed and that the general outcome is outstanding as exceeded the expectations of the organisers and of the participants.

The level of organisation, respect and collegiality were exceptional, favouring an environment to discuss, create and reflect in a positive manner.

3. Recommendations

It is recommended that for the upcoming National Forums, the slides (in digital format) are shared beforehand or straight after the presentations, so everyone can read them before the presentations or revisit them afterwards.

Also, it is recommended to have a shared a space for informal note taking, so both participants and organisers can share ideas and keep a timely record of what has being said during the brainstorming, discussions and Q&A sessions.

Annex III - Jordan OER Strategy Forum - PSUT, Amman

1. The National Strategy Forum: General observations

The National strategy forum was well organised, the agenda was followed in a precise and organised manner, there was space for discussion, reflexion and to present different approaches in Open Education.

On day one, the opening and welcoming messages were presented by Marcello Scalisi, from UNIMED, who quoted Obama's 'yes we can' transforming it to 'Yes we can, inshallah' and by Mashhoor Al-Refai, President, Princess Sumaya University for Technology. They were followed by Cristina Stefanelli, from UNIMED, who introduced the participants to **The OpenMed Project.** The introductions to OpenMed were followed by the presentation of the **Compendium on Open Education Practices and Resources in Jordan** by Sarah Merry and Daniel Villar-Onrubia, Coventry University, UK

The first presentation, **Blended Learning in an Arab Context: Lessons Learned and Unlearned** by Ahmad Majdoubeh, University of Jordan reflected upon the relation with the challenges of massification, as everyone must work together towards creating a synergy within higher education. Also it was mentioned that sometimes technology is ahead of us educators, and we need time to make technology work for pedagogical purposes.

Later, Ahmad Majdoubeh, University of Jordan, presented **Blended Learning in an Arab Context: Lessons Learned and Unlearned** where he stated that if Universities want to move towards blended or online or distance learning programmes to improve education, there needs to be a commitment to have guidance packages to put all the students at the same level as some of then do not have acquired all the skills they need while at school.

Moreover, he was mentioned that it is necessary to consider training and development for academics and support staff, as them will be those supporting Open Learning, therefore they must be continuously trained, but also, to ensure the quality of Open Learning, there must be a robust QA system and close monitoring of the OE development.

The third presentation, **EDRAAK as a Best Practice on Open Education** by Shireen Yaqoub, from Queen Rania Foundation, mentioned reflected about the state of the Arabic

content as only 3% of online content is in Arabic and 70% of Arabic speakers are only fluent in Arabic. In regards with the platform Edraak, it has 1 million registered learners, from which 50% have completed or are studying towards a BA, and has issued 75k certificates. In relation with the demographics, the age ranks mostly from 19-26, the highest number of learners are from Egypt, and 40% of the learners are female.

The following presentation, by Joseph Field and Andrew Parker from the British Council, **Language Learning for the Future,** mentioned that currently they are focusing on language learning and online education for refugees as the three main components to the BC offer are MOOCs, online learning and websites, and also the LASER project which is currently working with refugees in Jordan.

After the lunch break, the first presentation from the afternoon session was **Open Educational Practices** at PSUT by Sufyan Al-Majali, from Princess Sumaya University for Technology who focused on OE awareness - via seminars at student and faculty level, improving knowledge and levels of usage of OER explaining to the participants what does OER mean? What does using OER mean for faculty? And explaining the different CC licences to staff during training.

This presentation was followed by George Sammour, from Princess Sumaya University for Technology on **Utilization of MOOCs in Joint/Dual Degrees** as they are running in partnership with Hasselt University in Belgium a joint master's degree. There has been a high degree of acceptance and readiness from management, professors and students in both universities. However, there are some concerns because of concerns about the content and some students had concerns regarding their thesis, because they could not meet the supervisor in person.

To start closing up the day, Fabio Nascimbeni led the discussion from Universidad Internacional de La Rioja (Spain) about, **Inputs from the OpenMed OER Regional Agenda for the South-Mediterranean** on the following areas: Content and licences; pedagogy and practice; Technology; governance and collaboration between institutions.

The main conclusions are related with the correct use of public funds towards providing to learners with Open Content in Arabic, recognising those who are producing open content and accrediting knowledge acquired through OER and OEP, including MOOCs in both formal and informal educational environments. Also, it was mentioned that is important to incorporate openness in teachers' training, to help them to learn the technical skills and competences to find, use, remix and contribute with OER and to engage with and promote OEP, pursuing decentralised or federated solutions to knowledge management- helps to create inter-institutional and regional OER initiatives towards developing institutional and cross institutional flexible certification models, to help to assess, qualify and recognise the learning outcomes of those who have learned using OER and OEP.

Finally, it was discussed that it was important to liaise with regional and international initiatives to enhance visibility of SM region in OE promoting what is being done in the region and sharing good practices, encouraging and promoting academic research networks in open education in Arab.

As reflections, it was mentioned that there are no accredited programmes yet in Jordan, but institutions are accredited, therefore institutions and advocates need to be smart when trying to influence the ministries by showcasing good practice and there are some misconceptions about Open Content for being free means is of bad quality, but by applying strict quality assurance mechanisms, good practices can be documented and used as mean of advocating for policy.

2. Accomplishments

The agenda was discussed in-depth, lots of ideas were examined and it was a fruitful forum, therefore the objectives of the forum where achieved in a participative a collaborative manner in a outstanding way which promoted a space to reflect.

3. Recommendations

It is recommended to promote the agenda as an advocacy tool and to share the ideas discussed during the Q&A sessions as these may inspire others as challenges, such massification and training in Open Education are common issues to all partners.

Annex IV - Palestine OER Strategy Forum, Birzeit University

1. The National Strategy Forum: General observations

This forum, organised by the Center for Continuing Education at Birzeit University in collaboration with An-Najah National University, Palestine was a very insightful one. The day started with the words of Abdellatif Abuhijelh, President of Birzeit university represented by Osama Mimi from the Unit for Learning Innovation, Birzeit University, who introduced the audience with the state of the arts of Open Education in Palestine, and mentioned the challenges faced by Educators in Palestine. His introduction was followed by Nedal Jayyousi, Director of the National Erasmus+ Office in Palestine who presented some of the current Erasmus+ projects in Palestine. Afterwards, the OpenMed Project was presented by Cristina Stefanelli, who presented the landscape of the project and its progress amongst the partner institutions.

The last presentation of the morning was titled Why Open Education for Palestine by Marwan Tarazi, director of the Center for Continuing Education at Birzeit University, who started presenting the panorama of Open Education under occupation, considering that the reality of Palestine has relation with the lack of possibilities of internationalising their HE system because living under occupation means restricted access for students from Gaza to attend West Bank Universities, and also means limited access to the industry, to technological resources and to natural resources, and because their economy is a captive one there is lack of resources for research and for teaching, therefore, Openness is essential to Palestine at philosophical level.

He stated that the region needs strong policies and leadership and also a clear strategy that facilitates accreditation via Open Education but also, he mentioned that Open Education is a tool for liberation, and that is important for Palestine to Open up because if you don't open up someone else will do and because if you don't have an agenda someone else will do.

This presentation was followed by Mohammad AlSubu', from the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission who spoke about Accreditation Policies for Open Education in Palestine who stated that Open Learning is learning without frontiers, however open learning is not the same as online learning but they are complimentary. Also he mentioned that teaching based on research is key to quality.

Afterwards, Saida Affouneh, from An Najah National University, presented the state of the art of Open Education in relation with policy as 87% of the students are happy with using e-

learning for learning therefore is important to support students and to develop faculty towards promoting the sustainability of these programmes.

Lately Mohammad Moreb, from the E-Learning centre at Hebron University, presented their model for staff training which included training in pedagogical design for online resources, this model aims at enhancing the quality of teaching and learning.

The next presentation was by Sarah Merry and Katherine Wimpenny, from Coventry University, UK who presented the OpenMed's Compendium on Open Education Practices and Resources in Palestine, they were followed by Diana Sayej, from the Libraries at Birzeit University, Palestine who presented FADA, a repository aimed at sharing openly licensed materials produced at Birzeit, which include not only bibliographic resources, but OER, images and Open Data sets. Finally Daniel Burgos and Fabio Nascimbeni from Universidad Internacional de La Rioja (Spain) presented the inputs from the OpenMed OER Regional Agenda for the South-Mediterranean and explained how the agenda is being collectively developing promoting the participation the audience towards enhancing it.

To close an open discussion moderated by Osama Mimi from the Unit for Learning Innovation, Birzeit University, about the National Strategy for Open Education engaged the participants into sharing their ideas and thoughts towards developing and agenda and relevant policies to ensure a sustainable development of Open Education in the country.

2. Accomplishments

The agenda was carefully followed and the discussions were insightful, the case studies presented provided a clear perspective of the innovation made by Palestinian Universities and challenges they face, but also on how they are intending to promote a sustainable development to ensure the quality of the Open Educational Practices they are developing at the moment.

During the forum it was stated that OpenMed is an important vehicle to push and drive from Open Education, and that is key to promote Open Education to senior management towards raising awareness and ensure that they support the innovation and development of these practices.

Another thing mentioned is the importance of producing content that can be internationalised, towards promoting good practices from Palestine Universities and to join forces with other Palestinian universities and to develop a common action plan working together to promote Open Education inside and outside Palestine.

3. Recommendations

It is recommended to ensure that there is leadership and guidance to ensure that every university can participate actively in developing Open Education strategies and programmes, and to ensure that the national agenda is guided by the principles, which make Open Education in Palestine a unique case.

It is also important that they present their cases to the ministry and to senior management towards persuading them about the importance of promoting and supporting Open Educational developments, developing a national strategy, as these are key to enhance quality education and to promote good practices.