

A review of the OE policy landscape and OE Policy Lab update

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Back in 2019 we mentioned that we were [on the trail of open education policy co-creation](#). At the time we had not suspected the many twists and turns of 2020 at the time but despite some delays and changes of plans, we are pleased to say that at the opening of 2021 we have quite a lot to report. Since forming the [Open Education Policy Lab](#) in 2019 much of our research energy has been devoted to questions of policymaking and co-creation, as well as attempting to gain a better landscape view of the current state of OE policy. During this period a key aspect of this work has been done in [collaboration with the OER World Map project](#) led by Jan Neumann, along with [Fabio Nascimbeni](#). The focus of this collaboration was on improving the [OER Policy Registry](#) (a subset of records in the Map) and in addition, developing a brand new information and discovery layer over this dataset, now known as the [OE Policy Hub](#) and recently launched in October 2020 at CCSummit.

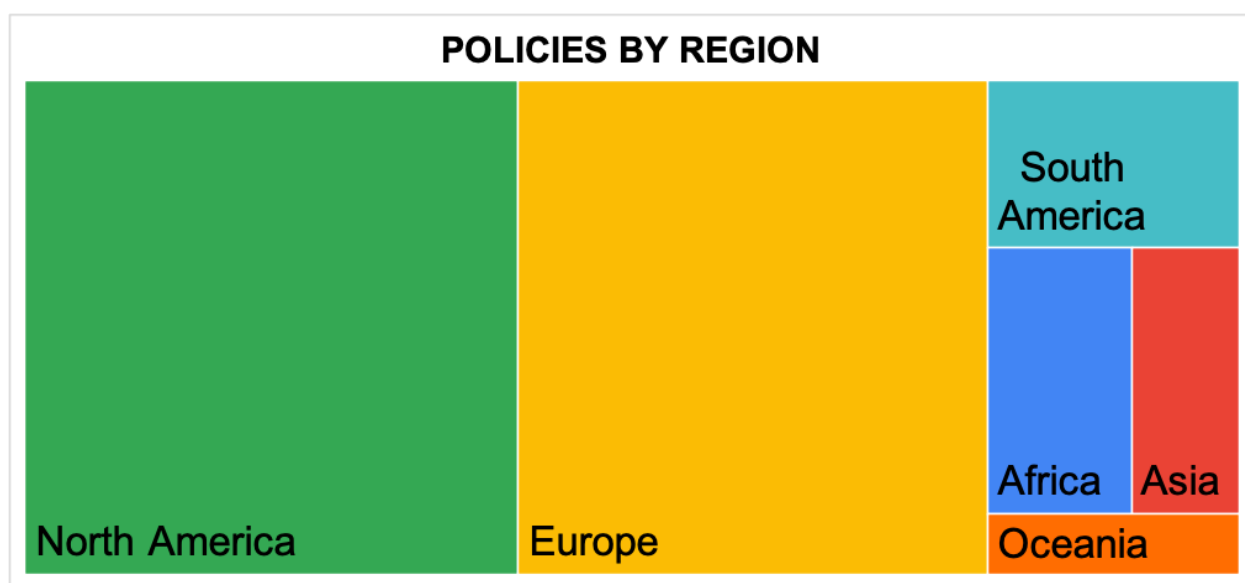
In addition to improving the usability and helpfulness of the platforms, as OE researchers and policy analysts, we were also aware that, as the saying goes, the map is not the territory, and that an unknown quantity of policy activity and documentary evidence exists but is so far uncaptured. Therefore, another key aim was to grow the collection of policies and policy-related resources available in the registry. Along with Fabio, we included the policies found in our EC-JRC study [Policy approaches to open education: Case studies from 28 EU member states](#) as well as those located while researching about policies for our paper [Fostering Openness in Education: Considerations for Sustainable Policy-Making](#). Subsequently, we have collaborated with others, such as Denise Cote from CCCOER's [Regional Leaders of Open Education Initiative](#) and Sandra Schoen and Martin Ebner from Open Education Austria, in contributing to the registry and writing practical guides for policymaking such as the [Ressourcen und Werkzeuge für die Entwicklung einer OER-Policy an Hochschulen](#). Between these efforts and further research, networking, and awareness-raising campaigns, we have been able to locate and contribute over 150 additional policies, such that the registry has grown from 144 records in late 2019 to 311 in January 2021.

Between November and December 2020 (with the last bit of energy we had left!), we released our new publication, [Open Education Policies: Guidelines for co-creation](#), and then decided to review the current state of OE policies according to the updated collection in the Map. We performed a quality

assurance review of the records on the OER policy registry with [Santiago Martin](#), an open education librarian, who curates the map data, and examined some additional relevant resources such EU parliamentary discussions and some distance learning strategies and policies from the HE sector to find those that include Open Education in their strategic aims.

So far, the landscape as mapped can be understood as follows.

At regional level, North America (Canada, USA and Mexico) is the region with the largest number of OE policies, closely followed by Europe. Recently, both South America and Africa are developing an interesting number of new OE policies.

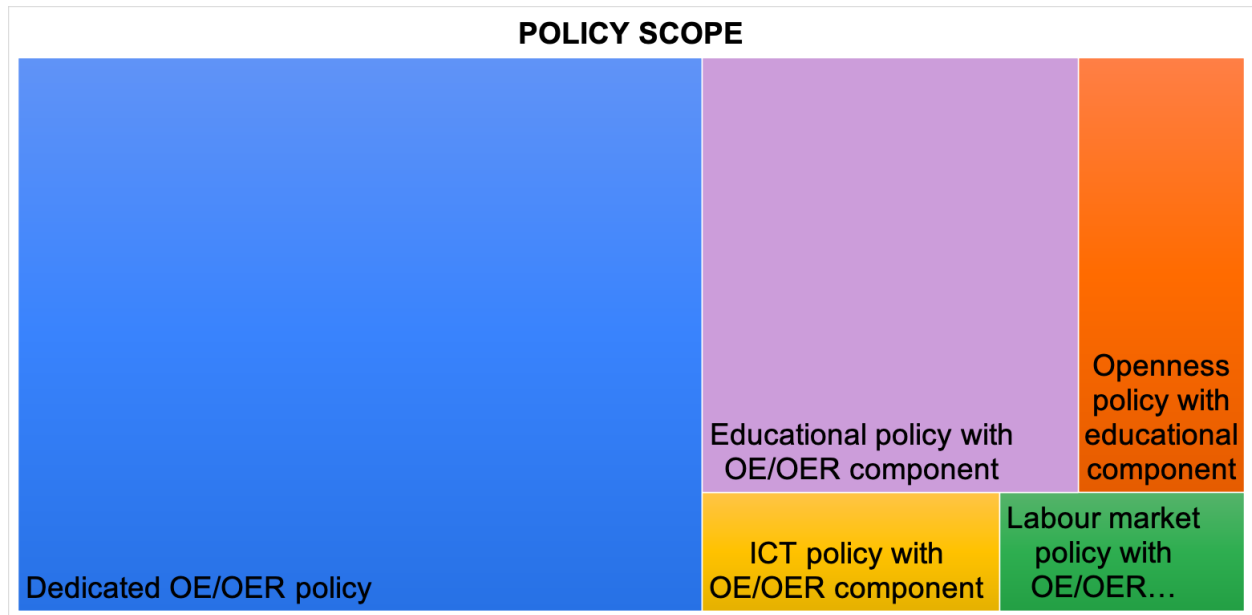


The largest numbers of policies are found at the national, state and institutional levels. In the case of the US, a significant number of policies and strategies are produced by the legislative bodies of each state, followed by institutional policies, while in Europe, the policies are predominantly institutional and national while the strategies tend to be multinational. In the rest of the world we usually find a mix of national and institutional policies, with some sub-national ones in countries such as Brazil.

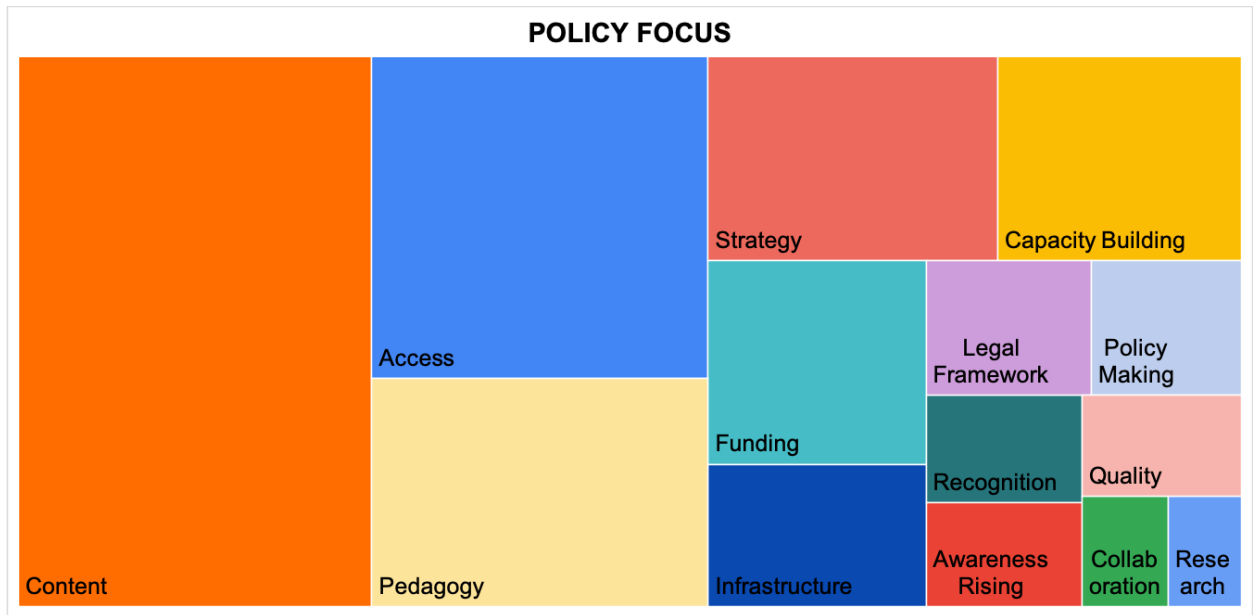
In terms of the education level addressed by policies, most focus on the Higher Education sector, with many examples from Europe, the US and South America. As universities tend to be quite independent, often they can design their own policies and strategies, however, in the case of the US, there is a significant amount of HE-focused policy at the state level, mostly to support the development of Open Textbooks to help lower the costs of education. In the case of schools, most of the policies are national ones, and a significant number comes from Europe, with some interesting

cases from South America. Finally there are also some cross-sector policies or strategies, which tend to be national ones focused on digital / ICT skills across all educational sectors.

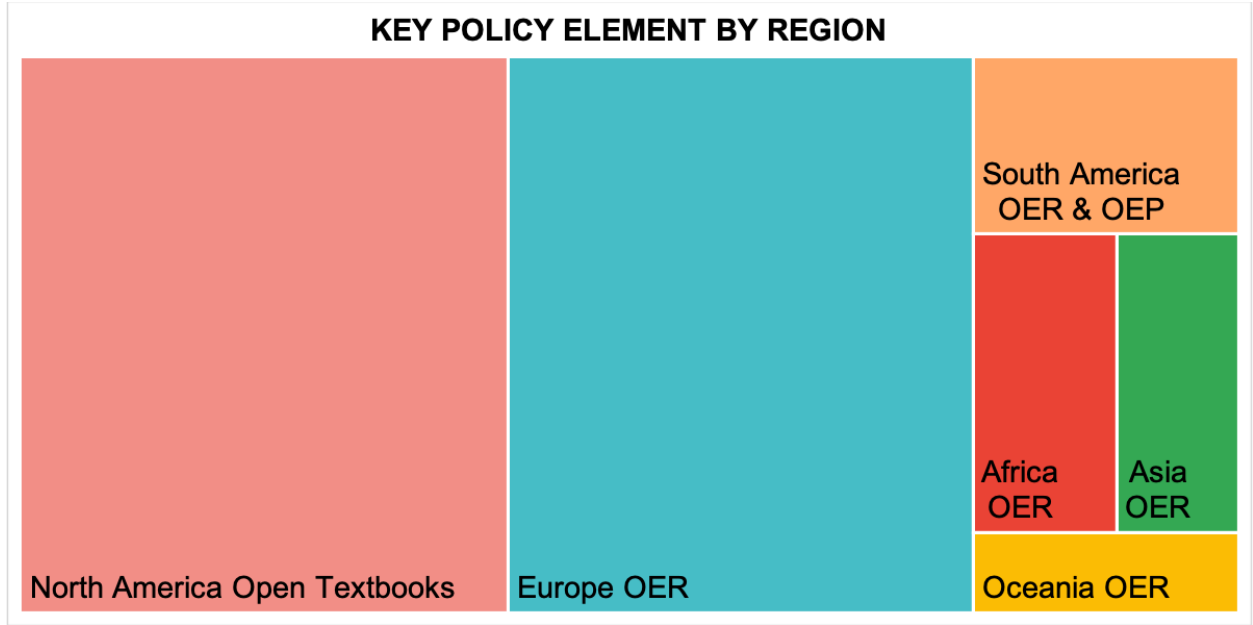
If we look at the policies by their scope, most of the policies we have mapped are dedicated Open Education / OER policies, followed by educational policies and strategies that have an educational component, while lately, we have noted an increase in Open Government, Open Access and Open Science policies that have an OE component.



Regarding the focus of the policies, most are dedicated Open Education/OER policies focused on content (OER and/or textbooks) and access (licensing), sometimes including elements of pedagogy (OEP), while some have a focus on capacity building and/or in fostering further development of policies and strategies (these are mostly found at national and multinational levels). A significant number of policies address making funding available for the development of OE, mostly in the US and in Germany.



If we look again at the policies by region, in North America (mostly US and Canada), the most frequent element is open textbooks, while in Europe are OER more generally, as in Africa, Asia and Oceania, while, in South America, policies have a component of OEP.



Finally, when we look at the different kinds of OE policy/strategy documents, we can have a wide variety, the largest number are institutional (HE sector) and national policies and strategies, followed by legislation, bills and decrees (US mostly), supranational strategies (e.g UNESCO, COL), digital

strategies, licensing policies, distance learning and MOOCs strategies, OE declarations (e.g Morocco, Scotland), OE roadmaps and pedagogic innovation policies.

We would suggest that 2020's emergency distance learning deployments have showcased the importance and value of open educational practices and OER, thus 2021 can bring spaces and opportunities to review and update the current policies and strategies to include open education as a key element. At our ALT Winter Conference session we asked participants to suggest why OE policies are needed, generating a range of interesting feedback that indicates this is an area of strong interest in the digital education community.



For those looking to develop new OE policies, we suggest starting by engaging with the [UNESCO recommendation on OER](#), and also taking an inclusive, democratic approach to the process as outlined in our guidelines to [co-create open educational policies](#). In this way, policymakers can be inclusive of a wide range of stakeholders, to design appropriate policies for local contexts and communities, as a transversal and democratic co-creation approach to policymaking can be a factor in policy effectiveness and ensuring impact.