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*Policy arguments for MOOC
and open online education*

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EADTU
6212 XN Maastricht
The Netherlands
Tel: +31 43 311 87 12
E-mail: secretariat@eadtu.eu

EADTU / www.eadtu.eu

Europe's leading institutional association in online, open and flexible higher education



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Policy arguments for MOOC and open online education

MOOCs have become an instrument for educational policy. Pedagogical issues as well as strategic and cost questions and considerations about the use of MOOCs are discussed by HEI's and national policy makers. MOOCs are also a policy instrument for knowledge regions, even more if they respect the national language and if they are adapted to regional/national needs. As such regional stakeholders and governments are more-and-more getting involved.

The output provide an overview of policy arguments used in countries of the SCORE2020 partnership. It focusses on arguments of higher education in cross-institutional collaboration and/or arguments for (not) governmental involvement in MOOCs and open education. This output provides the analyses of eight European countries, based on short papers from SCORE2020 project partners.

For project specific reasons, the short papers are written over a period of time (ultimo 2015 to primo 2017), and answer the question above in different ways. The following synthesis and analysis will endeavor to bridge these differences to find any overall tendencies, unique regional traits and shared objectives and policy arguments. Each country or region will be treated separately, followed by a discussion of these objectives and arguments. The short papers are included as annexes.

France

French higher education institutions have been autonomous since 2007. As part of the accreditation procedure, the institutions sign compulsory 5-year contracts with the Government. The process that leads to the finalized contracts covers not only accreditation matters in a strict sense, but also financial, pedagogical and organizational aspects.

These contracts are part of the National Higher Education Strategy, *Stratégie nationale d'enseignement supérieur* (StraNES) (Ministre de l'éducation nationale, de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche 2015). The general goals of the StraNES are to define what the nation expects of its higher education for the 10 next years, to highlight national objectives and the means to achieve them, and finally to identify possible future developments.

StraNes has the following recommendations of relevance to our topic:

Flexibility for lifelong learning: A high degree of flexibility in higher education, with courses à la carte, part-time courses, and distance courses in order to raise the general level of qualifications and make lifelong learning a reality to build a learning society (p. 18).

Internationalization: Supporting internationalized education by granting diplomas delivered through e-learning, in particular thanks to MOOCs (p. 68). The growing number of students globally leads to expectations of a doubling of foreign students in France, and online education can be used to meet this challenge.

The increase in the number of foreign students has led to a large need for training in French. A minimum of French language skills is required of foreign students for them to get diplomas. For better learning and integration, StraNes recommends that this training takes place before arriving in France. MOOCs can be used for this.

The French government has also published a *Digital Agenda for Higher Education 2013-2018* (Ministre de l'éducation nationale, de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche 2013). Among its proposals is France Université Numérique (FUN), the first French platform of online courses offered by French higher education institutions. The platform is now called FUN-MOOC and is subsidized by the Ministry.

In 2014, the Ministry of National Education, Higher Education and Research called for projects under the headline CréaMOOCs. These were to facilitate the development of MOOCs disseminated and co-produced in French-speaking countries. This call was intended to promote continuous education and support new educational methods by providing campuses with digital equipment and high-quality production capacities. A total of 2.3 million € was allocated to the 21 projects selected.

In 2015, *Initiatives of Excellence in Innovative Digital Training* (Initiatives d'excellence en formations innovantes Numériques, IDEFI-N), certified 12 projects with a total investment of 12.3 million €. Several of these projects concern MOOCs.

In the area of open educational resources (OER), the French government supported the production and publication of OER by financing Thematic Digital Universities (Universités Numériques Thématiques UNT). The UNT are no longer financed by the state except as part of calls for projects.

More recently, the National Digital Council (Conseil national du numérique: CNNum), published a document 2016 called *Digital University (Université numérique)* (UNT 2016). Under the headline "Common knowledge and pedagogy" (p. 19) it recommends that educational resources should not be published on university websites, which restrict access to the commons of knowledge. They should instead be published in a manner more suitable to open educational resources.

Thus, in spite of the autonomy of French higher education institutions, France has a number of national policies in place to provide and promote MOOCs and open online learning. These policies have been adopted in order to provide the flexibility necessary for lifelong learning and in this way ensure that France remains a learning society. MOOCs are promoted as a tool well suited for continuing education and helping higher education institutions to develop MOOCs is seen as a means of supporting new pedagogies. MOOCs are also considered among France's initiatives for excellence in digital innovation and as a driver for internationalization of higher education.

The Netherlands

The Dutch Open University was established in 1984 to offer higher education to those who had not had the opportunity to follow an academic education in the earlier stages of their life. It was also the start of several initiatives for open education. Between 2003 and 2011, they produced and published knowledge repositories freely available to teachers, and from 2009 they developed Wikiwijs, a

repository of OER in collaboration with Kennisnet.

Between 2000 and 2006, the government asked the Digital University to accelerate the implementation of digital learning resources; these resources were all free to use. A similar assignment was given to Fontys, a vocational university, who were asked to develop and disseminate open electronic educational tools. The goal is that by 2025 all Dutch teachers should share the educational resources they produce.

In regards to MOOCs, the Dutch institute for accreditation, NVAO, writes in *NVAO MOOCs and online HE* (NVAO 2014) that it expects HEIs will use MOOCs in their own programs. However, they do not see an independent role for these courses in the educational system.

The Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science aims for the Netherlands to be a forerunner in the field of Open and Online Education, as stated in *Quality in Diversity. Strategic Agenda for Higher Education and Research 2015-2025* (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science 2015). This strategy has been followed by several calls for projects, which have resulted in the development of several MOOCs and SPOCs as well as other forms of online and blended learning.

Under this same strategy, a broad research program (*Structuratie van Open Online Onderwijs in Nederland*) has been implemented to boost innovation in – and improvement of – the higher education sector. The program finances research in e.g. learning analytics and MOOCs. By 2025 all Dutch higher education institutions are expected acknowledge each other's MOOCs.

We see that the Netherlands have a long history of open online learning in order to promote lifelong learning as well as strengthening collaboration and encouraging sharing in the higher education sector. Open online learning in general, and MOOCs in particular, are seen as important aspects of maintaining and improving quality, and as part of a drive for innovation.

Sweden

For many years Sweden had a Government agency dedicated to overseeing issues concerning open online learning, namely the Agency for Networks and Cooperation in Higher Education (formerly the Swedish Net University). However, this agency was discontinued in 2008 and has not been replaced, neither by a new agency nor a unified policy in this area. Despite this, there has been a number of smaller initiatives and projects around open education, OER, etc..

The MOOCs in Sweden are offered by individual universities (mainly Karolinska, Lund and Chalmers) without any cross-institutional strategies or national strategy or policy. However, there has been two official reports on the topic.

Growth Analysis, an analysis agency under the direction of the Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications, published the first of these two reports in 2014.

Massive Open Online Courses – a study of the development in four countries (Growth Analysis 2014) was commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Research to study aspects of Massively Open Online Courses (MOOC) in the United States of America, the United Kingdom, India and China. The purpose was to study the transformative importance of MOOCs in general, their potential effects on

traditional education as well as challenges associated with this form of education. The report consists primarily of policies and practices regarding MOOCs in the four countries concerned. However, some policy recommendations are offered:

- MOOC-like courses may be particularly beneficial in continuing professional development.
- In order for MOOCs to gain a well-defined place in formal university education, challenges concerning learning environment, interactivity and business models need to be addressed.
- It will be of interest for Swedish educational institutions to use MOOC-technology proactively for pedagogic development at universities and in schools.

The second study was commissioned by the Government from the Swedish Higher Education Authority (Universitetskanslersämbetet): *Öppna nätbaserade kurser (MOOCs) i svensk högskola* (Universitetskanslersämbetet 2016). The report concludes that Swedish higher education institutions should be free to develop and offer MOOCs. There are some legal challenges, primarily concerning charging participants for certificates, as higher education in Sweden is free by law, but the report suggests changes to the laws in question that could remedy this. The main arguments presented are that this form of offering courses is beneficial for lifelong learning, provides means for increasing the level of knowledge in society and is a way for Swedish higher education institutions to be competitive in the international education market.

The study identifies three probable lines of development for the online provision of higher education based on the recommendations it presents:

1. Higher education institutions are free to develop MOOCs
2. Simultaneously the option is presented to offer hybrid courses, courses that are offered as modules in regular education on campus, while also being offered as MOOCs
3. Cross-institutional cooperation around shared modules for similar courses

The report concludes that a development along these lines will contribute to both higher quality of education as well as improved efficiency.

In conclusion, we see that the recommendations offered to the Swedish government emphasize MOOC as a vehicle for lifelong learning and a driver for pedagogic development, and that a systematic development of MOOCs contributes to both the quality and efficiency of education.

Norway

Open online education is not frequently referred to in the policies of Norwegian higher education. Most of Norwegian higher education is open by law, free of charge, and has sufficient capacity. Accordingly, the potentially disruptive character of MOOCs has not been as much emphasized in the Norwegian debate as it has in, say, the US.

Norway is 1752 km from North to South. In addition, one in four citizens live in rural areas. Because of this, the government has been promoting flexible and decentralized in higher education for decades. Many higher education institutions offer flexible and distance education options in subjects that are popular and/or of national importance. The Norwegian Agency for Digital Learning in Higher Education was founded to facilitate the institutions in this effort. Today the focus of the agency has widened to include the educational use of technology for innovation and quality in campus-based education as well as for the purpose of distance and flexible learning.

The government report *MOOCs for Norway* (Ministry of Education and Research 2014), the first of its kind in Europe, included numerous recommendations for policy and investments. However, a new government was elected shortly after its publication and the recommendations were not followed, with the exception of a grant of 5 mill NOK or roughly 550 000 EUR to research on learning analytics. As a result of this call, the University of Bergen got the assignment from the Ministry of Education and Research to establish a centre for this purpose. SLATE (Centre for the Science of Learning and Technology) coordinates interdisciplinary research to improve learning based on big data. MOOCs are among the most promising sources of data for such analysis, due to the large numbers of students.

A recently published report to Parliament on quality in higher education, *Kultur for kvalitet i høyere utdanning* (Kunnskapsdepartementet 2017) refers to *MOOCs for Norway* and adopts some of the recommendations of the government report. According to these recommendations, higher education institutions should:

- adhere to the principles of openness and sharing, in a way similar to open access to research, when developing educational resources (p. 52),
- strengthen their collaboration with businesses and industries when offering continuing professional development and other types of lifelong learning, and consider MOOC as a suitable instrument for this (p. 61), and
- develop the digital literacy of faculty members in order to benefit from the advantages of digitization of teaching and learning (p. 74).

This report has not yet been debated in Parliament and consequently no policies have been adopted. However, the recommendations emphasize MOOCs and open online learning as instruments not only for flexibility, but for openness in the form of improved access to knowledge in general and educational resources in particular. MOOCs are also proposed as engines of institutional and pedagogical quality and innovation. This is demonstrated by the fact that the report to Parliament emphasizes that SLATE should improve not just the deployment of educational technology, but the everyday learning of students. Digitization is perceived mainly as a factor in and driver of quality of education.

United Kingdom

The UK Government at present has no explicit stance on MOOCs and Open Education. A number of reports were commissioned as part of a fact-finding process that could lead to policies in the future. However, at the time of writing, there are no policies or policy arguments in this area. The reports are all listed in the UK annex. A report by Ferguson, Coughlan and Herodotou, which synthesized the research into MOOCs conducted by the Open University (OU UK), is worth mentioning. The synthesis was distilled into ten priority areas for MOOCs that should be of relevance to policy stakeholders:

1. Influence the direction of open education globally
2. Develop and accredit learning journeys
3. Extend the relationship between learners and the University
4. Make effective use of learning design
5. Make use of effective distance learning pedagogies
6. Widen participation
7. Offer well-designed assessment
8. Pay attention to quality assurance
9. Pay attention to privacy and ethics
10. Expand the benefits of learning from MOOCs

(Ferguson, Coughlan and Herodotou, 2016)

Organizations promoting open education policies and practices have provided support and awareness of issues of openness such as licensing of educational materials. Open Scotland, for example, provides one good such example in the UK (Campbell, 2016). The Scottish Open Education Declaration (Open Scotland 2014) is comprehensive and has built pressure for the Scottish government to support open education. The OER Hub of the Open University UK has researched the impact of open educational resources (OER) on teaching, and aims to raise the quality and profile of such research. It aims to build capacity in the OER research domain by conducting research into open education and OER and developing resources for the OER community.

Ireland

Several higher education institutions in Ireland offer MOOCs. They do this as individual institutions and there are no efforts at cross-institutional collaboration. There is a lack of detailed literature in the public domain on the formulation and expression of institutional MOOC strategies in higher education (Brown, Costello, Donlon & Nic Giolla Mhichil, 2015).

In May 2014, the National University of Ireland's (NUI) extended an invitation to tender for a study to assess the feasibility of a collaborative National online education initiative in the Irish university sector. This tender closed in September 2014 and there has yet to be any public statement in response to this initiative.

In April 2015, the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning published *Teaching and learning in Irish higher education: Roadmap for Enhancement in a Digital World 2015-2017* (National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning 2015). This Roadmap makes very few references to MOOCs. It focuses on enhancing campus-based education and speaks little of off-campus provision (Brown, 2015). Furthermore, the roadmap does little to address the barriers to

growth in online education that are a result of Ireland's restrictive funding model for part-time students studying off-campus.

There have been positive reports about the value of MOOCs in the media, and there are national efforts in place to harness the potential economic and pedagogical affordances of new technologies. Despite this, there is currently almost “no understanding of the private and social benefits of distance and online education in comparison with those of face-to-face education” (Rumble, 2014, p.208). At the time of writing there are no officially sanctioned or centrally managed Irish initiatives available now or planned for the future with reference to MOOCs.

Flanders, Belgium

Flanders does not as yet have official policies in place regarding MOOCs and open online learning. However, they have recently completed a comprehensive policy learning process: The Royal Flemish Academy of Belgium for Science and Art instituted a so-called Thinkers Program with two thinkers in residence: Diana Laurillard (University of London, Institute of Education) and Pierre Dillenbourg (EPFL, Lausanne), accompanied by an expert steering group. They visited all Flemish universities. The Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Agency (NVAO) was involved.

The final documents were presented to the Minister of Education and at a conference with participation of Belgian and some Dutch universities. The program suggested a strategy for innovation and transformation of university education. This strategy and other results of the Thinkers Program are described in the annex on Flanders.

Portugal and Spain

Neither Portugal nor Spain have policy statements or declarations on open online learning and MOOCs, and no financial incentives from the Government.

In Portugal, the Ministry of Education has provided some MOOCs, but do not see the need for cross-institutional collaboration to further this work. As for the higher education institutions, they are not invested in open online learning with the exception of the Open University (Universidade Aberta). However, some (groups of) researchers have participated in EU projects that have given them experience in this field.

In Spain, higher education institutions are financed, organized and managed by the regions. The central government has only one university, the National University for Distance Education (Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia). This speaks to the importance that is placed on this form of delivery. Spanish universities enjoy a high degree of autonomy. Because of this, the central government does not institute or reward cross-institutional collaboration.

Conclusions

Of the eight countries examined, only France and the Netherlands have explicit policies on open online learning and/or MOOCs. Sweden and Norway have both recently published important reports in this field, which propose a number of policy recommendations. The policy arguments used in these four countries are that open online learning and MOOCs strengthen these qualities:

	France	The Netherlands	Sweden	Norway
Flexibility				
Lifelong learning				
Institutional innovation				
Internationalization				
Pedagogical development				
Open access and sharing				
Cross-institutional collaboration				
Educational quality				

Figure 1. Policy arguments for open online learning and MOOCs in four European countries.

The need for lifelong learning is the only argument adopted by all four countries. This is not surprising, as that is indeed an important function of open online learning and MOOCs. This is also a policy area which receives a lot of attention with today's demographic changes and the challenges of the job market.

Apart from this, the most wide spread arguments are institutional innovation, pedagogical development, open access and educational quality. However, as both institutional innovation and pedagogical development are not goals in their own right but instruments of educational quality, it follows that the most important policy argument for open online education and MOOCs is improved educational quality.

Apart from quality, we see that many of these arguments are factors of an inclusive society that values openness and sharing. It is a safe assumption that these four countries utilize or plan to utilize MOOCs and open online learning to bolster an inclusive higher education system or to move their higher education system in a more inclusive direction.

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Annex I: France

Awareness raising based on evidence available

In France, higher education institutions have been autonomous since the **Law on Freedoms and Responsibilities of Universities (*Loi relative aux libertés et aux responsabilités des universités LRU*)** of 10 August 2007. Consequently, they can develop a settlement plan and make strategic choices.

The **Law of 22 nd July 2013 on Higher Education and Research (*Loi du 22 juillet 2013 relative à l'enseignement supérieur et la recherche*)** known as the ***Loi E.S.R.*** makes multi-year contracts (5 years) compulsory in the higher education system. It establishes a procedure for the accreditation of establishments, necessary for them to issue national diplomas, the methods of which are laid down by an order of 22nd January 2014.

During this procedure the financial, pedagogical and organizational aspects are taken into account during this state-establishment dialogue.

These site contracts are part of the National Higher Education Strategy (***stratégie nationale d'enseignement supérieur StraNES***) under the ESR Act whose first report was published in September 2015.

The general goals of the StraNES are to define in the long term what the Nation expects of its higher education, for the 10 next years, to highlight national objectives and the means to achieve them and finally to define the orientations and predictable evolutions.

One of the recommendations of the StraNES is the need to raise the general level of qualifications and make lifelong learning a reality in order to build the **learning society (*société apprenante* StraNES report p.18)**. To this end, it recommends a high degree of flexibility in higher education: courses à la carte, part-time courses, **distance courses**, academic breaks.

In one of its proposals "Developing, diversifying and ensuring the quality of internationalized training" (« *Développer, diversifier et assurer la qualité des formations internationalisées* » p.68), StraNES recommends "Supporting the offer of internationalized training by granting diplomas delivered through e-learning, in particular thanks to MOOCs." Indeed, taking the increase of the student population in the world into account, it considers that the number of foreign students welcomed in France should be doubled and that distance education via digital technology is a good answer to this request.

Another need is to train international students in French because now a minimum level in French is required from foreign students when they are awarded diplomas. This requires the setting up of training courses in French before and during study visits. French language training courses are encouraged before the arrival in France of these foreign students using online courses (MOOCs) in particular.

On 2nd October 2013 the Minister of Higher Education and Research introduced the **Digital Agenda for Higher Education** covering a period extending up to 2018. It involves 18 actions, including one emblematic project for training, **France Université Numérique (FUN)**, the first French platform of online courses offered by French higher education institutions and launched the same day. The Ministry's support for what became **FUN-MOOC** by decree on 19th August 2015 results in a subsidy and a granting of means in staff under a multi-annual agreement on objectives and resources. In this context, on 12th May 2014, the Ministry of National Education, Higher Education and Research

called for projects: **CréaMOOCs**. Its aim is to help the creation of MOOCs disseminated and co-produced in French-speaking countries, intended for continuous training or for supporting new educational methods (flipped classrooms...) by providing campuses with digital equipment and high-quality production capacities.

To achieve these targets, a total of 2.3 million € was allocated to the selected 21 projects.

The involvement of the state to support initiatives in the field of MOOCs or Open Training also results in funds within the framework of several non-specific devices existing within the framework of **Investments of the Future** (*Investissements d'Avenir*).

Thus, in June 2015, the action named "**Initiatives of Excellence in Innovative Digital Training**" (*"Initiatives d'excellence en formations innovantes Numériques"*) IDEFI-N, certified 12 projects with assistance ranging from 820,000 € to 1.5 million € for a total investment of 12.3 million €. Several of them concern MOOCs.

Among them is an innovative project **MoocInnov +** from the University of Bordeaux which offers to associate with a MOOC called "innovation in practice, management of creativity" (« *innover en pratique, management de la créativité* »), an educational platform of management of digital innovation project (an exchange system of skills integrating experts and students, MOOCs, a collaborative tutorial sharing system and a virtual classroom platform).

Another project, **#MOOCLive** of the University Paris Descartes, has the distinctive feature of associating a foreign partner: Charité Universitätsmedizin Berlin. In addition to the production of a MOOC in the field of public health, it will provide training for states and decision-makers with the aim to their evaluation and certification. These two activities are linked to a research and development program.

Since the 2000s, the **Thematic Digital Universities** (*Universités Numériques Thématiques UNT*) have turned to the production of Open Educational Resources. The produced resources are of certified quality assurance. The financial support of the state was direct from the outset, but the UNT are no longer financed by the state except as part of calls for projects. The member institutions of UNT directly finance the latter. The produced educational resources can be either free and open to all, or reserved for UNT members.

Furthermore, the state has set up the **National Digital Council** (*Conseil national du numérique: CNum*), whose mission was defined by a decree of 13th December 2012. Among its opinions, the May 2016 one is entitled "Digital University" (« *Université numérique* »). In the paragraph named "Common knowledge and pedagogy" (« *Les communs du savoir et de la pédagogie* ») it recommends (p.19) that educational resources should leave the websites of universities that function as restrictions on the commons of knowledge to become Open Educational Resources. In its reference table of actions, in order to accompany the digital educational transformation of universities, it advocates the development of real consideration of the educational publications in recruitment and careers (digital documents, research blogs, MOOCs).

The Ministry of National Education, Higher Education and Research is particularly concerned with the policies of institutions in the field of open training and production of Free Educational Resources when negotiating contracts with high education institutions. There is thus no general rule since each institution has autonomy in its policies, but strong incentives.

Annex 2 The Netherlands

Open Education in the Netherlands

In 1984, the Dutch Open University was established. This was supposed to be the end of a structure of second-chance/second-way education for those who hadn't had the opportunity to follow an academic education in the earlier stages of their life. It was also the start of several initiatives for open education in different forms.

The Open University has had different subsidized tasks over the last 20 years. Between 2003 and 2011 the Ruud de Moor Centre for teachers developed several knowledge bases on science and economics, which were freely available for all registered teachers. Together with Kennisnet (also a governmental supported knowledge base for educators) the OU developed Wikiwijs, a repository of OER's (start 2009, now only supported by Kennisnet).

The Dutch government did more; between 2000 and 2006, the Digital University had the assignment to accelerate the implementation of digital sources for education; these resources were free to use, either for the participants or a broader public. A similar assignment was given to Fontys, a vocational university, to develop and disseminate open electronic educational tools.

The Dutch institute for accreditation (NVAO, 2014) expects that HEI's will use MOOCs in their own programs, but don't see an independent role for these courses in the educational system. Still, the Dutch government aims to be a forerunner in the field of Open and Online Education, as stated in the Strategic Agenda 2015. This was substantiated by a subsidy of 1 mio euro's for projects aimed at "the big societal problems".

In 2015 a new program was started by the department of education. Eleven projects were awarded a subsidy of € 830.000 within a project stimulating the development of MOOCs, SPOCS, online and blended learning.

With respect to Open Education, the goal is that in 2025 all teachers have to share their educational resources and HEI's have to acknowledge the MOOCs of the other organizations.

Within the same program, a broad research program is implemented, to develop a vision on innovation and improvement of HE (learnin analytics, MOOCs as a tool for teachers, € 1.350.000). This program (*Met onderzoek onderwijs vernieuwen*) started in 2016, lead by Marco Kalz (OU) labelled Sooner (*Structuratie van Open Online Onderwijs in Nederland, 01/09/2015 - 31/08/2020*).

Lastly, several HEI's have been developed MOOCs in the past few years. According to <https://www.mooc-list.com/countries/netherlands> there are 87 courses, provided through Coursera, EdX, FutureLearn, Canvas Network Iversity and other platforms (EMMA). In OpenUpEd are another 9 courses available.

Note: only 15 of the 96 courses are (also) available in Dutch.

Annex 3: Sweden

Policy Arguments on the Theme of MOOCs and Open Education in Sweden

Developments in the Nordic countries regarding policy arguments on the theme of MOOCs and open education, including Sweden, have much in common. Currently there are no centrally managed initiatives, but there is activity at the institutional level.

Higher education institutions in Sweden offer courses through the major US platforms. There have been many smaller initiatives and projects around Open Education, OER, etc., but so far without coordination or incentives on a national level. The agency that handled issues concerning IT and learning, Agency for Networks and Cooperation in Higher Education (formerly the Swedish Net University), was discontinued in 2008 and no one took over their area. Sweden currently lack an overbridging organization and therefore there has only been small projects and initiatives over the past 7 years. The Ministry of Education doesn't have a policy area that drives the issues of openness.

The MOOCs in Sweden are run by individual universities (mainly Karolinska, Lund, Chalmers) without coordination nationally. Most universities in Sweden lack a strategy around MOOCs or Open Education in general and there are no incentives of the Ministry.

There is no evidence of a national strategy on open educational resources in response to UNESCO's Paris Declaration and no plans for a national repository such as DLR made available by BIBSYS for use by Norwegian higher education institutions. On behalf of the Swedish Ministry of Education the Agency for Growth Policy Analysis (Myndigheten för tillväxtpolitiska utvärderingar och analyser) has studied the development of MOOCs. The analysis has focused on the development in the UK, USA, China and India. The purpose of the analysis was, in addition to studying developmental features, to discuss the potential significance MOOCs may have for higher education, as well as discussing some of the challenges that are linked to this form of teaching. Examples of such challenges include issues relating to quality and the ability to acquire credits. The analysis was completed autumn and winter 2013-2014 and published in February 2014 ¹.

The Government of Sweden has commissioned a study to describe the development and composition of education offered in colleges in the last 20 years, both at national level and at the institutional level. The study considers whether the supply of education is balanced in terms of quality requirements, the students' demand and labor market needs. The study also assess the need for changes in education to better meet future needs. The assignment includes a separate assessment of summer courses and flexible education and opportunities for increased use of Swedish MOOCs. The main conclusions of the report are that the higher education sector is essentially well balanced and the dimensioning generally works well. The assignment was completed October 15th 2015 ².

¹ Tillväxtanalys (2014) *Massive Open Online Courses – en omvärldsanalys i fyra länder*. Available from: <http://www.tillvaxtanalys.se/in-english/publications/pm/pm-working-paper/2014-04-07-massive-open-online-courses----a-study-of-the-development-in-four-countries.html> (retrieved 17.11.2015)

² Ministry of Education (2015) *Högre utbildning under tjugo år*. Available from: http://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/18f07e4081134302a3c546341337cdff/hogre-utbildning-under-tjugo-ar-sou_2015_70.pdf (17.11.2015)

The Swedish government commissioned the [Swedish Higher Education Authority](#) the task of writing a report with recommendations on how MOOCs could be promoted within the framework of Swedish higher education, outlining opportunities as well as barriers. Published in the beginning of 2016 ³, the report concludes that the development of MOOCs within the state-funded education system is positive. However, the report wants to leave the strategic decisions regarding funding, credits and certificates up to the institutions. Charging fees for MOOC certificates is one of the controversy in the report. Allowing this breaks a central principle of Swedish higher education, that it should be free from tuition and examination fees. The report also recommends a greater focus on pedagogical development in e-learning. The authorities believe that the proposals and recommendations outlined in the report will lead to higher quality and increased efficiency. Still each institution are to decide the extent to which they will follow the guidelines.

³ Universitetskanslersämbetet (2016) Öppna nätbaserade kurser (MOOCs) i svensk högskola. Redovisning av ett regeringsuppdrag. Available from: <http://www.uka.se/download/18.6f4a800151c42a8026460c/1453890873753/oppna-natbaserade-kurser-mooc-rapport2016-1.pdf>

Annex 4: Norway

Policy Arguments on the Theme of MOOCs and Open Education in Norway

Open education is not a frequently referred to in the politics of Norwegian higher education. The reasons for this are many:

- All public higher education is free and – at least in principle – open.
- Almost all higher education is public.
- The Norwegian higher education sector is well established and has sufficient capacity.
- Even though it is not a right established by law, any candidate holding a high school diploma can enter some kind of higher education.

The threshold to higher education is therefore relatively low, and the capacity of open education to provide access for free is no controversial issue in Norwegian politics, as this is more or less the natural state of affairs. Accordingly, the potentially disruptive character of MOOCs has not been as much emphasised in the Norwegian debate on digitalisation of higher education as it has in, say, the US.

Another factor completes this picture, namely Norwegian geography. Norway is 1752 km from North to South. In addition, one in four citizens live outside of cities and towns. Because of this, the government promotes flexibility in higher education and many HEIs offer flexible and distance education options in subjects that are popular and of national importance. Norway Opening Universities were founded to facilitate the institutions in this effort. Today the main focus of our work has shifted to include the educational use of technology on campus as well as for the purpose of distance and flexible learning.

All higher education in Norway requires that the student is registered at an HEI and takes part in a formal exam. Because of this, some candidates for MOOCs and open education will be excluded – the ones that do not hold a high school diploma or have the time and/or inclination to complete the exam. For this group, there is a choice of non-profit and for-profit distance education institutions offering a broad range of courses that do not result in ECTS.

In other words, there are no policy statements on MOOCs and open education in Norway. The government report *MOOCs for Norway*⁴ includes detailed discussions on the topic as well as recommendations for policy and investments. However, a new government was later elected and the recommendations were not followed, with the exception of a grant of 5 mill NOK or roughly 550 000 EUR to a research project on learning analytics.

Every Norwegian government since 2010 has promoted increased cross-institutional collaboration in higher education. A government report on the structure of the higher education sector published in 2008⁵, recommended mandatory merging of many smaller HEIs. This recommendation was not implemented. Instead, the government in 2010 granted 50 mill NOK or roughly 5.5 mill EUR in

⁴ Ministry of Education: *MOOCs for Norway* (NOU 2014:5) <http://bit.ly/1kvqdVG>

⁵ Ministry of Education: *Sett under ett — Ny struktur i høyere utdanning* (NOU 2008:3) <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/NOU-2008-3> (no English version available)

incentives to HEIs for the purpose of cross-institutional collaboration and to promote a beneficial division of labour on a national scale.

Recently, this effort has been taken one step further with a Report to the Parliament about the restructuring of higher education⁶. This report mandates that the number of HEIs in Norway is reduced considerably and has set a deadline by which the institutions themselves have reached agreements to merge according to their own wishes and needs. This process will culminate at the start of 2016 when 14 of the HEIs are merged into 5. 18 additional institutions that have for different reasons not found or selected partners to merge with, will be evaluated by the Ministry of Education in the year to come, based on a set of quality criteria⁷.

This process will by necessity result in a closer collaboration, also in the field of MOOCs and open learning, across campuses and provinces, and across mountains and fjords. These new, large and geographically distributed institutions will need MOOCs, mOOCs or similar in order to facilitate the merger process, and could benefit from using MOOC-like platforms to offer their courses across campuses and, hopefully, to open them up to students outside the institution. Whether this will happen, remains to be seen.

⁶ Ministry of Education: *Konsentrasjon for kvalitet*, Meld. St. 18 (2014-2015) <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/meld.-st.-18-2014-2015> (no English version available)

⁷ See map: <http://bit.ly/1GszznN>

Annex 5: United Kingdom

Policy Arguments on the Theme of MOOCs and Open Education in the UK

The UK Government stance on MOOCs and Open Education is not explicit. A number of reports were commissioned and these are detailed below following a brief introduction to the MOOC and Open Learning landscape in the UK.

Background

Open Distance Learning has long been synonymous with Open University in the UK and their OpenLearn platform had parallels with MIT Open Courseware as a significant proto-MOOC initiative. The dominant UK MOOC platform FutureLearn which is owned by the OU UK. Its first MOOC ran in October 2013. FutureLearn reports that it has now almost 4 million registered learners, taking many courses offered by 87 partners. A report published by Ferguson, Coughlan and Herodotou (2016) synthesized the research into MOOCs conducted by the Open University and developed 58 recommendations that have emerged from the research. These are further distilled into ten priority areas for MOOCs that should be of relevance to policy stakeholders:

1. Influence the direction of open education globally
 2. Develop and accredit learning
 3. journeys
 4. Extend the relationship between learners and the University
 5. Make effective use of learning design
 6. Make use of effective distance learning pedagogies
 7. Widen participation
 8. Offer well-designed assessment
 9. Pay attention to quality assurance
 10. Pay attention to privacy and ethics
 11. Expand the benefits of learning from MOOCs
- (Ferguson, Coughlan and Herodotou, 2016)

A valuable report on UK based MOOCs that details the enrolment figures and completion rates published in 2016 contributed to the evidence base for the characteristics of MOOCs and their learners (McIntyre, 2016). This report made freedom of information requests of the platform providers to compile data which is noteworthy as there is a dearth of valid primary data on MOOCs and many reports comprise in large part of literature reviews.

Government Reports

A 2013 UK Government report by Yuan and Powel (2013) of JISC set out to help decision makers in higher education institutions gain a better understanding of MOOCs and trends towards greater openness in higher education. A literature review placed MOOCs the wider context of open education, online learning and changing higher educational landscapes. However, although the report was written from a UK higher education perspective it was mostly informed by developments in MOOCs from North America. A further government report

The Department for Education in the UK produced a report on the results of an investigation of the potential of MOOCs in compulsory age education i.e. k12 (Cairneagle Associates, 2014). It comprised a literature review, and data from surveys and interviews of teachers. Teachers purported to be sceptical of the benefits of MOOCs that rely on self-motivation for younger learners. Teacher CPD via

MOOCs and education of their potential benefits as teaching tools and aids were recommended however. Some useful costings were also made of MOOC development scenarios.

Other Factors

More widely, organizations such as those promoting Open Education policies and practices have provided strong lobbying, support and awareness raising of the general issues of openness such as for example in licensing of educational materials. Open Scotland for example provides once good such example in the UK (Campbell, 2016). Its comprehensive [Open Scotland Declaration](#) has built pressure for the Scottish government to support open education. The [OER Hub](#) in the OU UK has conducted extensive research into various aspects of open education. It has researched the impact of open educational resources (OER) on teaching and learning aiming to raise the quality and profile of such research. It aims to build capacity in the OER research domain, conduct research into open education and OER and develop resources for the OER community.

Costs, Brexit and the Future

Prior to 2016 the high cost born by students in the UK in the form of fees was one of the key factors influencing developments in UK Higher Education. Although the [UK HE International Unit](#) could claim costs comparable with other countries and high satisfaction ratings, within Europe the UK has the highest fees.

The main issue now facing the UK is the impact that its withdrawal from the European Union will have following the vote by referendum of the people to leave.

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Cairneagle Associates (2014) MOOCs: Opportunities for Their Use in Compulsory-Age Education: a Research Report. Department for Education. June 2014

Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (2013) The maturing of the MOOC: literature review of massive open online courses and other forms of online distance learning

McIntyre, C. (2016) UK MOOC Report 2016 - An insight into MOOCs provided by UK Institutions. MOOC Lab

Annex 6: Ireland

Policy Arguments on the Theme of MOOCs and Open Education in Ireland

A number of Higher education institutions in Ireland offer MOOCs. The highest profile MOOCs have been delivered through the UK Platform FutureLearn and Moodle. These MOOCs are run by individual universities and institute of technology (e.g. Trinity College Dublin, Queens University of Belfast, Dublin Institute of Technology and Sligo Institute of Technology).

A problem not exclusive to Ireland is the lack of detailed literature in the public domain on the formulation and expression of institutional MOOC strategies in Higher Education (Brown, Costello, Donlon & Nic Giolla Mhichil, 2015). One of the few published institutional strategies in Ireland from the University of Ulster highlights the scale of the challenge presented by MOOCs pointing out that “costs are prohibitive unless in partnership” and that such partnerships could be comprise of actors from “from higher education, the commercial, professional body or third sectors” (Hamber, Jaffrey & Murphy, 2015, p.6).

In May 2014, the National University of Ireland’s (NUI) posed an invitation to tender for a study to assess the feasibility of a collaborative National online education initiative in the Irish university sector. Information on this tender was documented in Irish media.

The new organisation, which would include Irish universities outside the NUI group, may begin by offering a series of MOOCs showcasing Irish education. Depending on the level of public interest, the organisation could then move into profitable accredited programmes (Powell, 2014, p.6).

This tender closed in September 2014 and there has yet to be any public statement in response to this initiative. In the same time frame, the Tata Consulting Group (an Indian based, global enterprise, with operations in more than 100 countries employing over 500,000 people worldwide) met with senior Irish politicians and institutional presidents with the objective of making Ireland the centre of the world for online degrees (Brown, 2015). Following the Tata delegation’s visit, in early December 2014, the Irish Government’s Joint Committee for Education and Social Protection held a special meeting to discuss the future of online learning. This story of the Tata Group in Ireland is still playing out in Ireland.

In April 2015, a National Roadmap was published for enhancing teaching and learning in higher education in a digital world (National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, 2015). This Roadmap makes very few references to MOOCs with this acronym completely absent from the Executive Summary and high-level recommendations. The Roadmap focuses on enhancing the traditional campus-based experience and is largely silent in terms of off-campus provision (Brown, 2015). Another point of note, is that this roadmap does little to address the current barrier to growth in online delivery as a result of Ireland’s restrictive funding model for part-time students studying off-campus. The need for inclusive funding models that help to open up education, develop more flexible modes of delivery, and diversify student populations is a central tenet of recent high-level reports on the modernisation of European higher education (High Level Group on the Modernisation of Higher Education, 2014).

Conclusion

In short, there are no centrally managed Irish initiatives available now or planned (to date) for the future with reference to MOOCs. This fact is despite positive reports about the value of MOOCs in the

media and wider national efforts to harness the potential economic and pedagogical affordances of new technologies. As it stands currently there is almost “no understanding of the private and social benefits of distance and online education in comparison with those of face-to-face education” (Rumble, 2014, p.208).

Brown, M. (2015). MOOCs as social practice: A kaleidoscope of perspectives. In E. De Corte & L. Engwall (Eds.), *Emerging models of learning and teaching in higher education: From books to MOOCs?* Wenner-Gren Foundation international Series. Portland Press: London. [In press].

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Rumble, G. (2014). The costs and economics of online distance education (pp. 197-216). In O. Zawacki-Richter & T. Anderson, (Eds.). *Online distance education: Towards a research agenda*. Athabasca Press. Retrieved 27th April 2014 from <http://www.aupress.ca/index.php/books/120233>

Annex 7: Flanders, Belgium

Awareness raising based on evidence available

In Flanders, a significant awareness raising initiative was taken by the Royal Flemish Academy of Belgium for Science and the Arts.

During 2014 and 2015, a so-called Thinkers Programme was set up with two thinkers in residence: Diana Laurillard (University of London, Institute of Education) and Pierre Dillenbourg (EPFL, Lausanne). An expert steering group has accompanied the programme. All Flemish universities have been visited (KU Leuven, UGent, UHAsselt, UAntwerpen, VUBrussels), as well as one university of the French Community (UCL, Louvain-la-Neuve). The Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Agency was involved. The final documents were discussed with the Minister of Education. A conference was held with participation of Belgian and some Dutch universities.

The aim of the program was the development of a systemic vision on the optimal exploitation of ICT and the internet for the new learning of the 21st century. The vision should relate to hypotheses, possible models and future scenarios on three levels: micro (learner, teacher, class), meso (institution) and macro (policy, governments).

The current situation

According to the report, Flemish universities already integrate learning technologies in their teaching. Blended learning is practiced everywhere under varying forms. Sometimes slides series or entire video-lectures are made available in the learning environment. The flipped classroom or other innovative formats, e.g. virtual labs are applied as well. There is a variety of educational formats across universities and within universities. But, innovation by new modes of teaching and learning is too much an incremental process. It is not leading to a transformation of the university, exploiting the opportunities of new technologies.

In the Flemish landscape, MOOCs are not a priority on the agenda of Flemish universities, although in all universities they have been discussed and some projects do exist, but without a strong commitment from the university leaders. Flemish universities have the pedagogical and technological expertise required for MOOCs. In some cases, this is distributed among several units, such as a team for the learning management system, an 'e-Learning center' or a 'teaching & learning center'. Moreover, some universities have research teams in educational psychology and in computer science that are of international renown in digital education. More collaboration between the service units mentioned and the research departments could create great opportunities for MOOCs (Dillembourg)

Universities have to do what every self-respecting organisation does: to invest in its core business. In addition to research, the other core business of universities is teaching. They cannot ignore the imperative to invest in it, especially when learning technologies present such impressive opportunities for improving the way we conduct that business. So at every level of the education system its leaders must imagine ways to invest that will drive innovation forward in a way that creates sustainable models for conducting education, and achieves all our ambitions for wider participation, higher attainment, collaboration with industry, and pro bono offerings (Laurillard).

Hence, the ambitious goal of developing an innovation and transformation of the current higher education provisions becomes realistic if one takes into account the current level of development of digital education in Flemish universities.

A strategy for innovation and transformation of university education

This innovation and transformation strategy should be a global educational strategy, not a strategy restricted to MOOCs. The focus should not be exclusively on MOOCs, but include all educational activities of the universities for students on campus as well as off campus. A course may include any combination of on-line and face-to-face activities, depending upon the requirements of the target audience and the learning objectives. This approach allows also for identifying synergies between staff with regard to various educational offers: the set of digital and physical resources produced for a course can be restructured for another one without duplicating the effort.

This systemic analysis suggested two actions:

- Update the principal drivers in the education system to harness digital technology and so drive the development of new practices.
- Develop the enablers to make the new practices effective.

The alternative is that the system will continue to rely on piecemeal local innovations in teaching and learning that have no large systemic effect. At institutional level and at national level, education leaders must consider their own responsibility for innovation. Updating educational drivers and enablers to keep pace with the digital world could be sustainable and progressive over the long term, and would make innovation affordable as a natural part of how institutions operate.

The government and inter-institutional collaboration

Teachers and institutions need the signal from government and official bodies that it is important and valuable to invest their time and energy in blended learning innovations. At present the drivers they are responsible for prioritise the conventional, and have not adapted to prioritising the new and the digital. The ideas and innovations will develop bottom-up, but the recognition, incentives and rewards can only be top-down.

Some projects can only be conducted if several universities collaborate. If each University had a new vice-rector whose mission is to re-think the digital campus, they might together constitute a Digital University Committee (DUC). Administrative staff of the Flemish University and University College Council could provide the administrative support for this committee. This committee would have missions that are better tackled collectively:

- To negotiate an agreement with a MOOC provider in order to enable all universities to run open online courses. It has become difficult or expensive to join some platforms. Instead, it should resist to the temptation to develop a new platform.
- To define the conditions under which a MOOC may lead to ECTS credits.
- To develop the enablers of leadership, teacher professional development, communities of

practice, technology-based tools, research evidence and shareable resources that will make the new e-learning practices effective.

- To set up a national exercise to improve the understanding of the costs and benefits of conventional and digital teaching and learning methods and accreditation, Inviting institutions to present new financial models for teaching and learning.
- To negotiate with the Flanders Science Foundation to launch a research initiative on evidence-based education or to create a learning science institute.
- To negotiate with OUNL, which has a large experience in online education. The existing partnership with the OUNL should be rethought, enabling new forms of collaboration in research, innovation and the implementation of new modes of teaching and learning. This would lead to excellence in education at both sides.

Creating the Digital University Committee must not be a condition to start MOOC projects and be used as an alibi for slowing down the pace of MOOC initiatives.

From the side of the Minister for Higher Education, each HE agency has to update the principal drivers in the education system to harness digital technology and so drive the development of new practices, e.g. strategic plans, performance funding, quality assurance and accreditation criteria, certification for teacher professional development, creating evaluation and research evidence,...

A proposal was done to create a professional development MOOC for academics in all the Flemish universities to develop a school-oriented 'HE preparation' MOOC, to assist in the transition to university study

The institutional level

At the institutional level, following recommendations for innovation with new modes of teaching and learning are made (Laurillard), such as:

- Focus on the education challenges, and then demand the most imaginative solutions from the technology, being aware of what it can do, and dreaming of what it might do. Challenges might be e.g. large student numbers and a low staff/student ratio (teaching large groups / establishing smaller learning communities; quality requirements; improving student progress and success; flexibility needs of part-time and non-traditional students, etc.).
- Use academics' membership of a collaborative professional community to build the evidence-based understanding of teaching with digital technologies.
- Use internal funding and quality drivers to require each level in the institution to invest in continual teaching and learning innovation, against expectations of returns
- Invite every level within the institution to articulate how and why it uses technologies, as part of its accreditation and quality assurance, in terms of improvements in personalisation, flexibility, inclusion, and efficiency.
- Create competitive R&D funding for blended learning innovation, part sponsored by the IT industry.
- Use competitive funding for MOOCs to promote the discovery of the pedagogic innovation and new models that will ultimately create the differentiation factor in comparison with other universities.

- Make available more sophisticated design tools for supporting peer collaboration and assessment, automated assessment, and efficient tutor assessment in the learning environment.
- Take responsibility for understanding the new cost structures, learning benefits, and likely returns involved in developing and running large-scale open, online courses.
- Bring students and their representatives into the policy debates on the future of education, because it is their future

Re-thinking higher education in Flanders

The Steering Group has delivered a position paper, based on the Thinkers Report and has discussed this in meetings with the Minister of Education. It agrees with the idea of a central institute for the coordination and the support of the interuniversity collaboration at the Flemish level, as well as the collaboration with companies, professional organizations, government and other stakeholders. The Inter-University Institute for Technology in Education (ICTO) not only is to support and encourage all forms of collaboration between partners, but it can also coordinate certain projects such as creating MOOCs as an agile response to society's needs, e.g. MOOCs in collaboration with other stakeholders such as business sectors. It is led by the vice-rectors of the five universities and The Dutch SURF could be an example . Also the existing collaboration with the Dutch Open University is in for a creative overhaul in view of the digital evolution, the convergence of on-site and distance education and the expertise of the partners involved.

At the European level, ICTO can connect with European partners. EADTU and OpenupEd are suggested.

Recommendations at the institutional level are:

- Establish the function of vice-rector for digital innovation, pointing out a strategic plan and coordinating all innovation initiatives
- Make digital innovation and an integrated institutional approach an criterium for quality assurance and accreditation
- Make blended teaching and learning part of teacher evaluation
- Recognise teaching as a design science and as a research and innovation domain
- Apply performance based funding and include the digital innovation and transformation of higher education as a criterium
- Create an interdisciplinary centre for educational innovation at the institutional level with following tasks: doing interdisciplinary research on blended teaching and learning; developing new modes of teaching and learning and teacher professional development; supporting teams for digital courses and learning materials.

Annex 7: Portugal and Spain

Portugal

What are the policy arguments (government and HEI level) in your country for (not) starting cross-institutional collaboration and/or governmental involvement in MOOCs and open education?

The following questions can guide you in structuring your answer to the question above:

- Is there a policy statement/declaration on these topics in your country?

No, there is not.

- What are the governmental arguments used in favour support for cross-institutional collaboration on open education and MOOCs or the counter arguments if such collaboration is not supported?

They do not have nor specific rules nor indications in this field. The ministry has provided some MOOCs but they do not see the need to organise and coordinate nets among the universities for this purpose.

- Are there financial incentives from the government for such collaboration?

No, there are not.

- Are institutional policy makers in your country in favour of cross-institutional collaboration on open education and MOOCs? If so, what arguments are used? If not, what counter arguments are used?

They do not perceive MOOCs and Open Education as serious option. Some universities have begun with own experiences and collaborations with other countries through European project. The Universidade Aberta is the most active and strong partner in this design line.

Spain

What are the policy arguments (government and HEI level) in your country for (not) starting cross-institutional collaboration and/or governmental involvement in MOOCs and open education?

The following questions can guide you in structuring your answer to the question above:

- Is there a policy statement/declaration on these topics in your country?

No, there is not.

- What are the governmental arguments used in favour support for cross-institutional collaboration on open education and MOOCs or the counter arguments if such collaboration is not supported?

The HEI are a competence of regions. That means that the finance, the organization, and the

management are regional competences. The central government has only one university: UNED. And they do not have nor specific rules nor indications in this field. Some services that depend on the central ministry to train teachers in basic levels and secondary schools have created MOOCs to carry out this training but as a central service, not a collaborative strategy.

- Are there financial incentives from the government for such collaboration?

No, there are not.

- Are institutional policy makers in your country in favour of cross-institutional collaboration on open education and MOOCs? If so, what arguments are used? If not, what counter arguments are used?

Then, there is not any cross-institutional collaboration on open education and MOOCs and the reason is that education is a regional field and each region organises and manages their own resources and models.

On the other hand, universities have a great autonomy to plan and to organise nets and collaborations. Then, collaborations and exchanges are coming by their initiatives and their needs, solving their own problems, for instance, the lack of funding.

I think that some time has to pass to understand that MOOCs and Open Education is not a fashion but a strong movement that is changing our organization and learning models.



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