

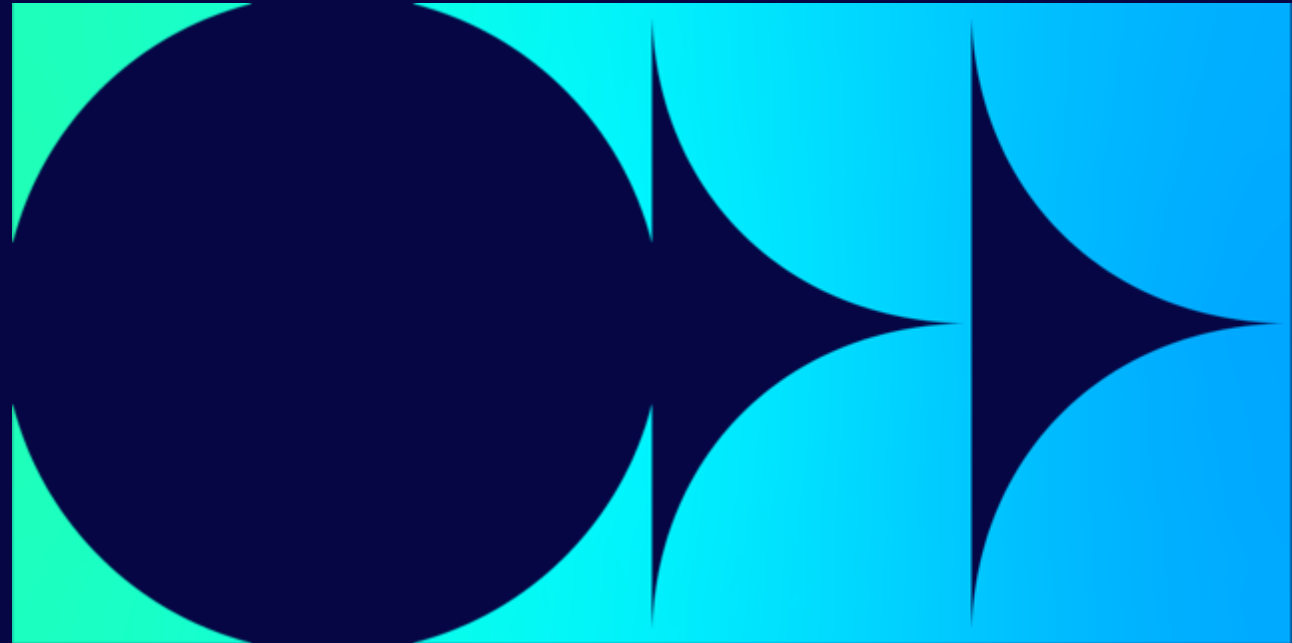
# Open Education from a Lifelong Learning Perspective

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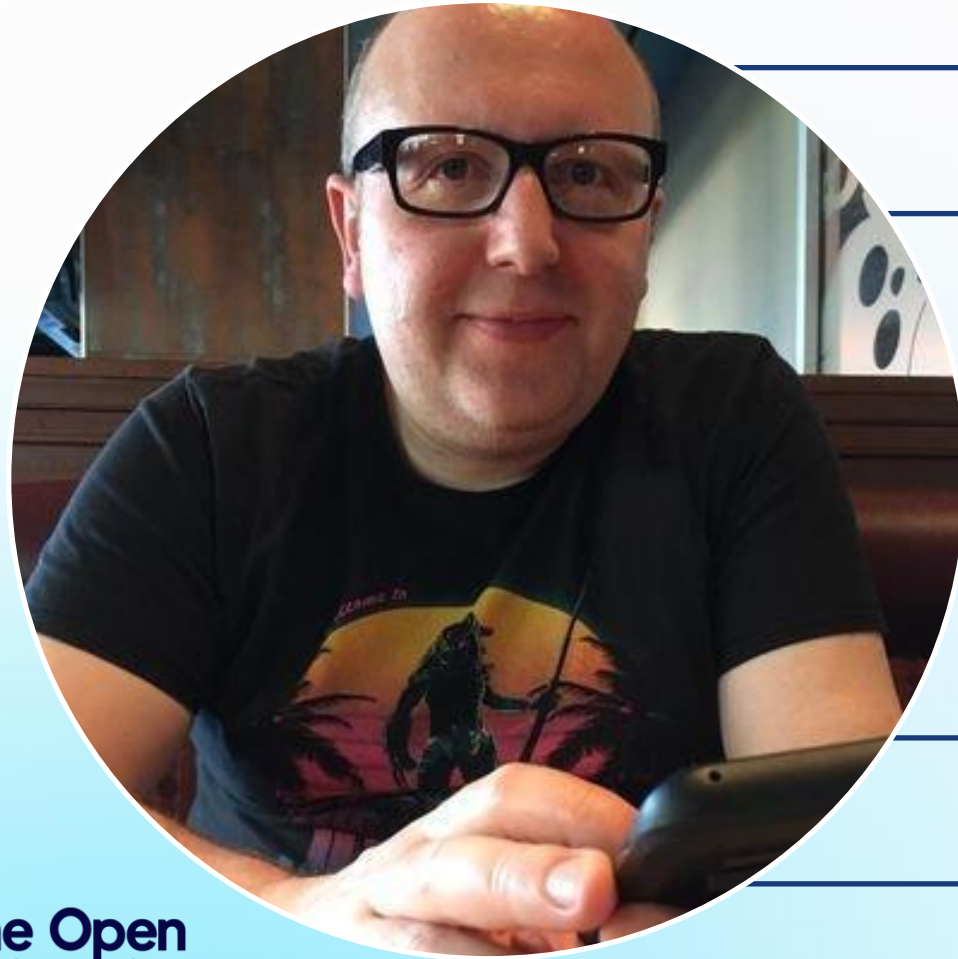
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# Open Education and Lifelong Learning

## Motivations and Opportunities

- **What is open education?** An ecosystemic approach to meeting the proposition that learning should be available to all, including values, practices, policies, resources and communities.
- **What is lifelong learning?** Ongoing, self-motivated learning (formal + non-formal) and development to improve professional skills, employability, active citizenship and social inclusion.
- **What is the context?**
  - Rapid obsolescence of skills driven by technological change
  - Demographic changes (aging populations, migration)
  - Improving equitability of access to learning
- **Key opportunity:** open education can remove price barriers, enable localisation, and empower educators and learners to be producers, not just consumers.

# Open Education and Lifelong Learning

## Embedding Open Education in the Lifelong Learning Policy Landscape

- **European frameworks:**

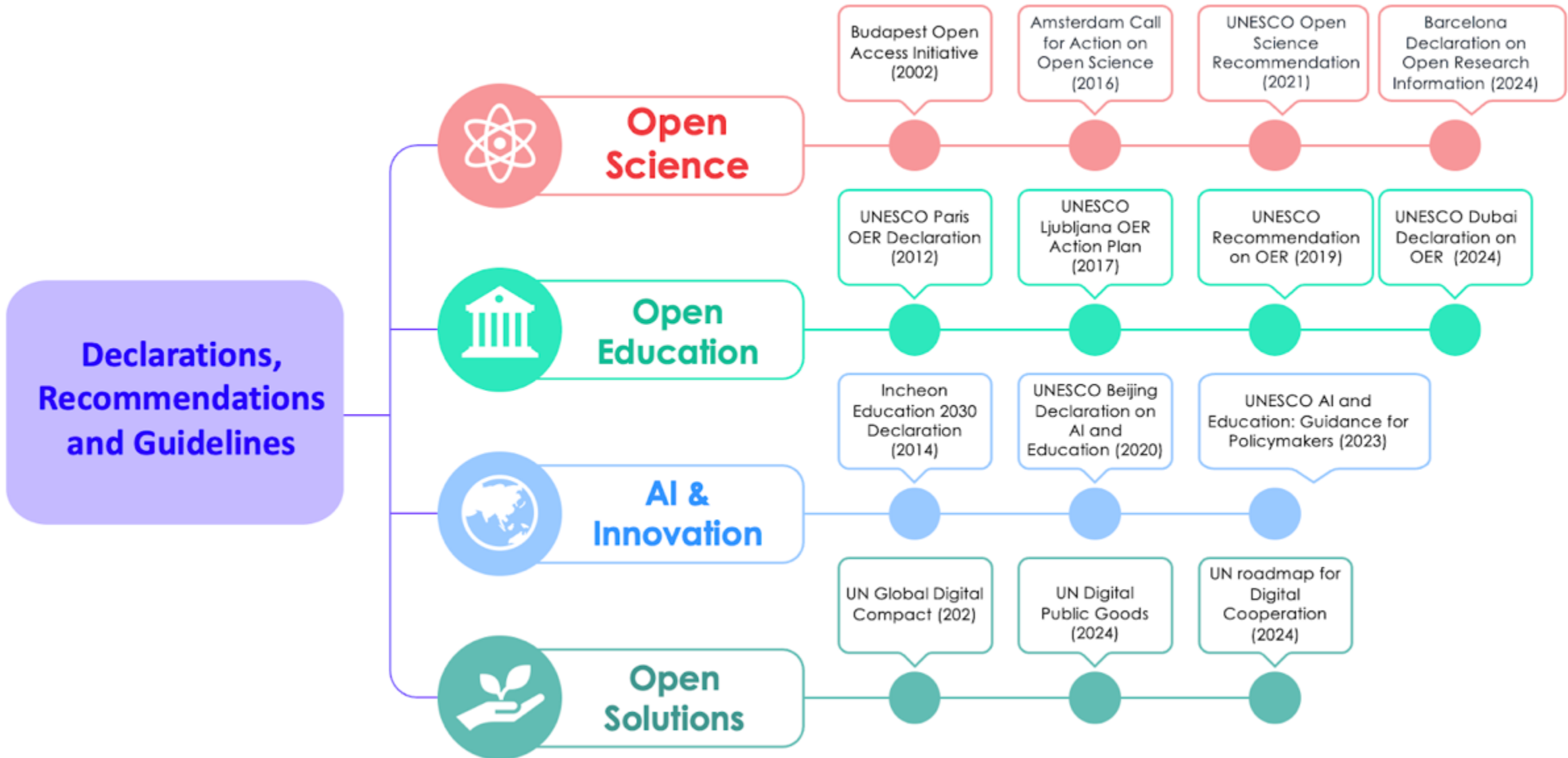
- European Education Area aims to create a common European space for education and training by 2025, with open digital content as a core component.
- European Skills Agenda (2020) sets an ambition to upskill and reskill 120 million adults by 2025, explicitly naming digital and open learning as enablers.
- The Digital Education Action Plan 2021–2027 promotes open, interoperable digital learning environments and pushes for public digital content to be openly licensed by default.
- The Council Recommendation on Microcredentials (2022) opens formal recognition pathways for short, flexible open learning.

# Open Education and Lifelong Learning

## Embedding Open Education in the Lifelong Learning Policy Landscape

- **Global frameworks:**

- The 2019 UNESCO Recommendation on OER establishes five action areas: capacity building, policy development, inclusive and equitable access, gender equality, sustainability, and international cooperation.
- The 2024 UNESCO Dubai Declaration affirms open educational resources (OER) as digital public goods, supporting a shared commons that can take advantage of artificial intelligence (AI). The declaration calls for AI tools in education to be transparent, equitable and rights-preserving, and for AI-generated content to be aligned with open principles.



# Open Education and Lifelong Learning

## Key aspects of open education

- **Open Educational Resources (OER):** Teaching, learning and research materials in any format, digital or otherwise, that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open licence (Creative Commons) permitting no-cost access, adaptation and redistribution.
- **The lifelong learning spectrum:** Early childhood → compulsory schooling → VET → Higher Education → adult/continuing education → workplace learning → senior/community learning. OER can operate at every stage.
- **5Rs Framework:** Retain, Reuse, Revise, Remix, Redistribute – what makes a resource truly "open".
- **Potential for innovation:** open practices, open pedagogy, open access publishing, open recognition of learning.



# Open Education for Formal Lifelong Learning

## Practical Cases

- **Open Universities and degree-level OER:** The UK Open University and OpenLearn platform have made degree-level content freely available to millions of learners who cannot or choose not to enrol formally. OpenLearn alone has over 5 million registered users. The Open Universiteit in the Netherlands follows a similar model.
- **VET and open upskilling:** Vocational and technical education is where skills obsolescence hits hardest. OpenEdX-based platforms and Coursera for Campus are being deployed by national employment agencies across Europe to deliver openly licensed reskilling programmes to unemployed and underemployed adults.

# Open Education for Formal Lifelong Learning

## Practical Cases

- **Microcredentials and open recognition:** The EU Microcredentials Recommendation, combined with Europass and open badge standards, is creating infrastructure for recognising learning from open platforms that count towards a formal qualification in an increasing number of Member States.
- **Supporting Inclusion:** Open pedagogy approaches are being used in universities and VET colleges to make formal learning more participatory and culturally responsive. Openly licensed materials enable teachers to adapt content for learners with disabilities, for multilingual classrooms, and for contexts where standard textbooks are inaccessible or unaffordable.

# Open Education for Non-formal Lifelong Learning

## Practical Cases

- **Public libraries as Open Education hubs:** Libraries are the oldest open learning institution. In their contemporary form, they are increasingly active distributors of open content and open pedagogy. Mozilla's Web Literacy curriculum, openly licensed and freely adaptable, has been deployed in libraries across Europe to develop digital skills in adults who would never attend a formal course.
- **Open civic knowledge:** Wikipedia is one of the world's largest OER projects, though it is rarely framed that way. The Wikimedia ecosystem – including Wikimedia Commons, Wikidata and Wikisource – represents a model of citizen knowledge production at scale. Wikimedia Education programmes are now active in dozens of countries.

# Open Education for Non-formal Lifelong Learning

## Practical Cases

- **Workplace and professional informal learning:** Open-source communities have long modelled peer learning without institutional structure. The broader principle – openly licensed training materials, shared learning resources, peer mentoring – is increasingly adopted in workplaces. Several European employers and sectoral bodies are developing openly licensed professional development frameworks, particularly in health, education and social care, where continuing professional development is mandated but resources are scarce.
- **Senior and intergenerational learning:** University of the Third Age (U3A) networks across Europe are integrating open content and open recognition, enabling U3A groups to offer high-quality learning without institutional infrastructure or licensing costs. Digital inclusion programmes for older adults use OER because adaptation to local context, language and accessibility need is essential and open licensing makes this legally and practically possible.

## Dubai Declaration on OER (2024)

- ▶ Calls for digital public goods that enable open education for all
- ▶ Promotes equitable and inclusive access to knowledge
- ▶ Urges integration of emerging technologies to advance SDG 4 (Quality Education)
- ▶ Emphasises collaboration, capacity building, and policy alignment
- ▶ Envisions an open ecosystem for lifelong learning



## Dubai Declaration on Open Educational Resources (OER)

Digital Public Goods and Emerging Technologies for Equitable and Inclusive Access to Knowledge

## Opportunities

- Translating and localising OER at scale – addressing a key barrier
- Accessibility tools based in machine learning such as automatic captioning, text-to-speech, reading level adaptation
- AI powered OER recommendation systems (e.g. OER Commons, MERLOT)
- Use of AI by non-formal learners as a study support, research tool, writing partner, or critical thinking prompt



## Dubai Declaration on Open Educational Resources (OER)

Digital Public Goods and Emerging Technologies for Equitable and Inclusive Access to Knowledge

## Risks

- Undermining the principles of open education by extracting value from the commons without returning it
- Creating new forms of knowledge 'enclosure'
- Quality erosion resulting from a lack of peer review, contextualisation and pedagogical design
- Creating a form of dependency which may reduce agency and community around lifelong learning



## Dubai Declaration on Open Educational Resources (OER)

Digital Public Goods and Emerging Technologies for Equitable and Inclusive Access to Knowledge

# AI, Open Education and the Dubai Declaration

## Opportunity, Risks and Tensions

- The UNESCO Dubai Declaration puts forward an idea of supporting generative AI projects which respect open licencing... is this realistic when AI companies don't respect licensing at all?
- Similarly, the Declaration requests that AI tools trained on public educational content should produce outputs that remain in the public domain or are openly licensed. AI systems deployed in education should be transparent about how they work, what data they use, and who controls them. This is not currently the norm.
- Knowledge ecosystems should prioritise digital public goods, open solutions – but can we really expect private companies to do this? Similarly, can we expect transparency at the possible cost of losing competitive edge?
- Are the values of open educators, lifelong learning compatible with the principles of generative AI?





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### The double-edged sword: Open educational resources in the era of Generative Artificial Intelligence

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# Open Education and Lifelong Learning

## Key Takeaways

- **Open Education is a rights and inclusion framework, not just a content strategy.** The value of open licensing, open pedagogy and open recognition is not efficiency – it is the structural removal of barriers that prevent people from learning across their whole lives.
- **European and global policy is strongly supporting open education for lifelong learning.** The EU Skills Agenda, the Digital Education Action Plan, the UNESCO OER Recommendation and the Dubai Declaration all provide legitimate policy anchors for Open Education practice and advocacy.
- **AI makes the Open Education argument more urgent, not less.** As AI reshapes learning at every level, the question of who owns educational content, who controls learning systems, and who can access them becomes more consequential.

# Lillehammer

# **LIFELONG LEARNING**

## ICDE Conference 15 – 17 February 2027

### What is the conference?

- Established international conference
- A meeting place across sectors:
  - Education
  - The world of work
- Focus on lifelong learning in times of:
  - Digital transformation
  - Green transition
  - Changing competence needs
- A large in-person conference with participants from 30+ countries across all continents



### What makes it unique – and why it matters

- Focus on practice and implementation
  - What works – for whom – and why
- Learner-centred use of digital technologies
  - Supporting learning, inclusion, and competence development
- Connecting three levels
  - Policy – Institutional development – Teaching & learning
- Concrete outcomes
  - Lillehammer Lifelong Learning Roadmap
- Platform for collaboration
  - Partnerships, knowledge exchange, future projects

Learn more and  
register at:

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