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BEYOND OPEN ACCESS: OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES (OER) FOR LEGAL CLARITY, SUSTAINABILITY, AND DIGITAL SOVEREIGNTY IN EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY ALLIANCES

13 March 2025 – Unite! Ed Future Conference 2025

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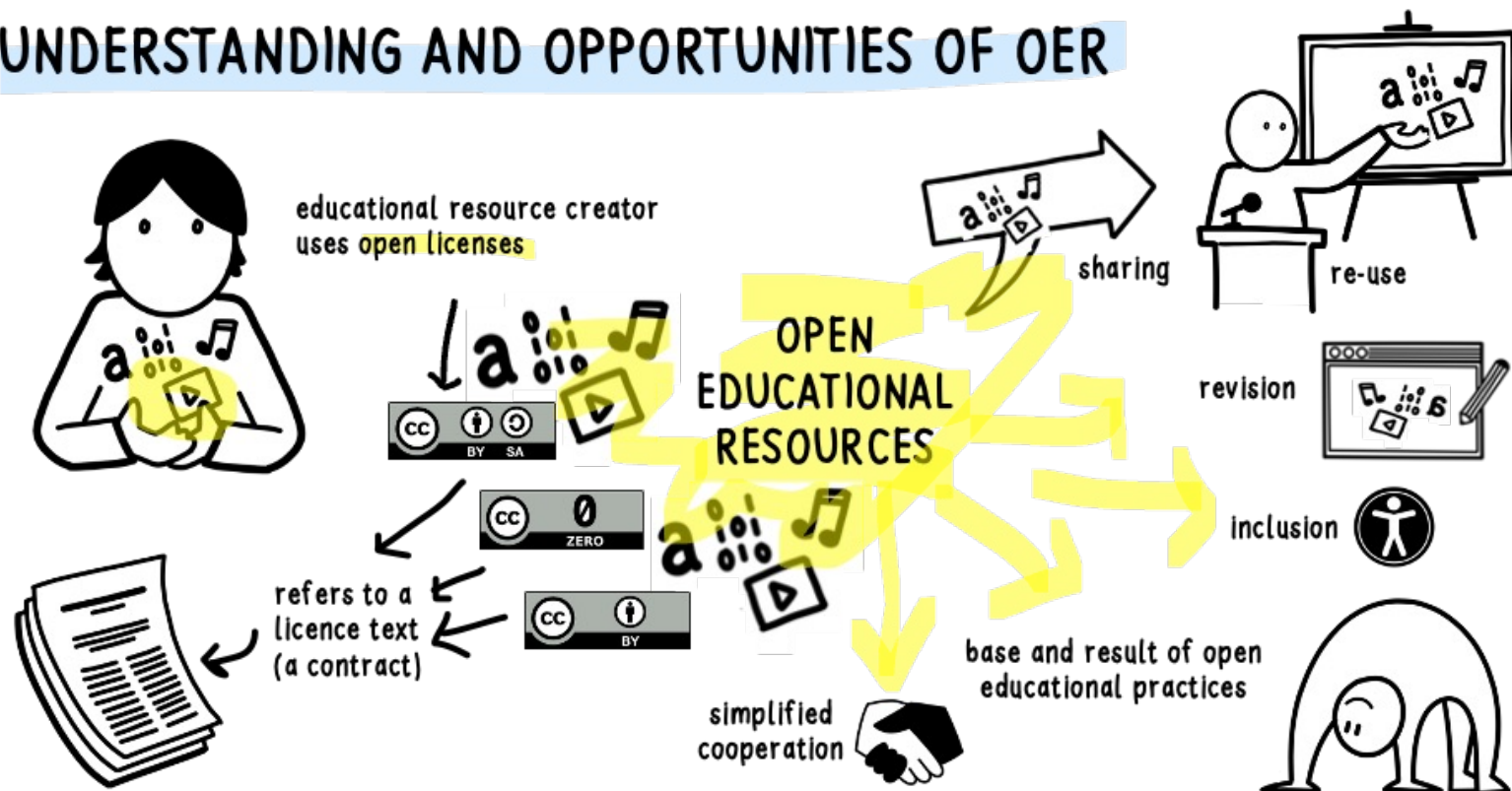
The slides are available online at:
<https://doi.org/10.3217/cz2rm-g9g13>

Agenda

- Introducing OER
- Background: The role of OER at TU Graz
- Three (featured) arguments for OER in European university alliances (as Unite!)
 - a. Legal Certainty in Cross-Border Collaboration and Education
 - b. OER and Sustainability in Educational Resource Development
 - c. Digital Sovereignty through OER
- Discussion



UNDERSTANDING AND OPPORTUNITIES OF OER

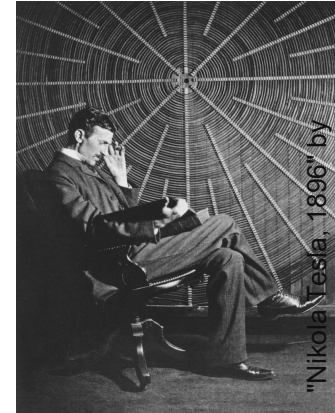


Source: CC BY 4.0 Atenas et al., 2024

Graz University of Technology (TU Graz)

- Founded 1811
- 7 Faculties, 3 Campuses
- 19 BA programs, 16 MA programs, 14 Doctoral schools
- 13,700 students, 3,900 staff & faculty
- Fields of Expertise are Advanced Materials Science, Human & Biotechnology, Information, Communication & Computing, Mobility & Production, Sustainable Systems
- Since 2022 Partner of the Unite! European Alliance
- Climaneutral University in 2030

A prominent student



"Nikola Tesla, 1896" by
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<https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/mark/1.0/?ref=openverse>.

OER beginnings and milestones at TU Graz

- 2010 First OER projects starts
- 2011 publication: OER as strategy at TU Graz Life Long Learning unit
- 2013 Co-organiser of first German-speaking MOOC about OER as OER: COER13
- 2013 Launching iMooX.at: MOOC platform for CC licensed online courses
- 2017 Open Education Austria partner
- 2019 OER repository
- 2020 OER policy
- 2022 First OER report
- 2025 „Certified OER Higher Education Institution“ (oer-zertifikat.at)



(Special) Arguments for OER in European university alliances (as Unite!)

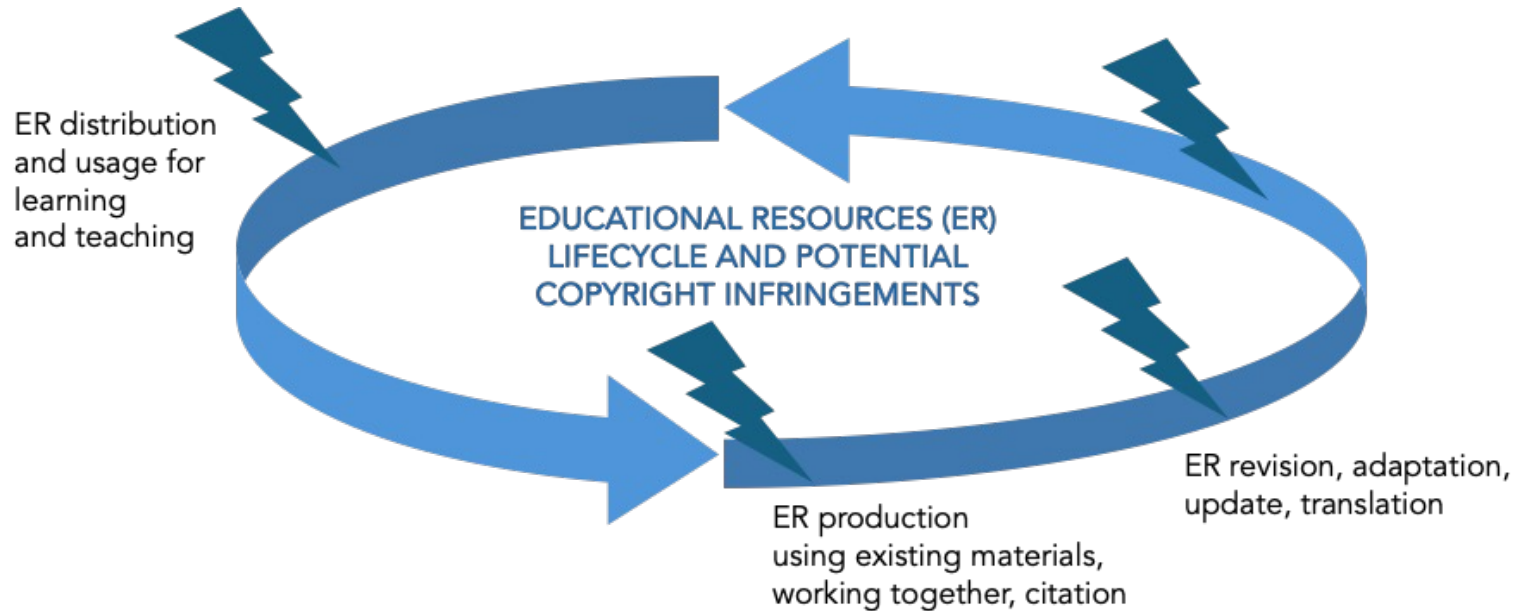
- a. Legal Certainty in Cross-Border Collaboration and Education
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Copyright challenges in international university collaborations if educational resources are used / produced

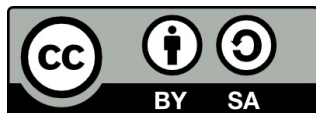
- Differences in Copyright Regulations
- Legal Uncertainty Across Borders
- Restricted Use of resources (no copies, no modification)
- Post-Project Uncertainty
- It is very complex to agree and allow re-use
- Differences in universities



Potential copyright infringements



If open licenses are used ...



- Modification, re-use allowed
- No legal uncertainty
- Higher Impact
- Attribution of project/university
- Commercial use (exploitation) is possible after project
- Can be used for own LLM
- (and a lot more...)

Sustainability and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) - Unite! as Green University



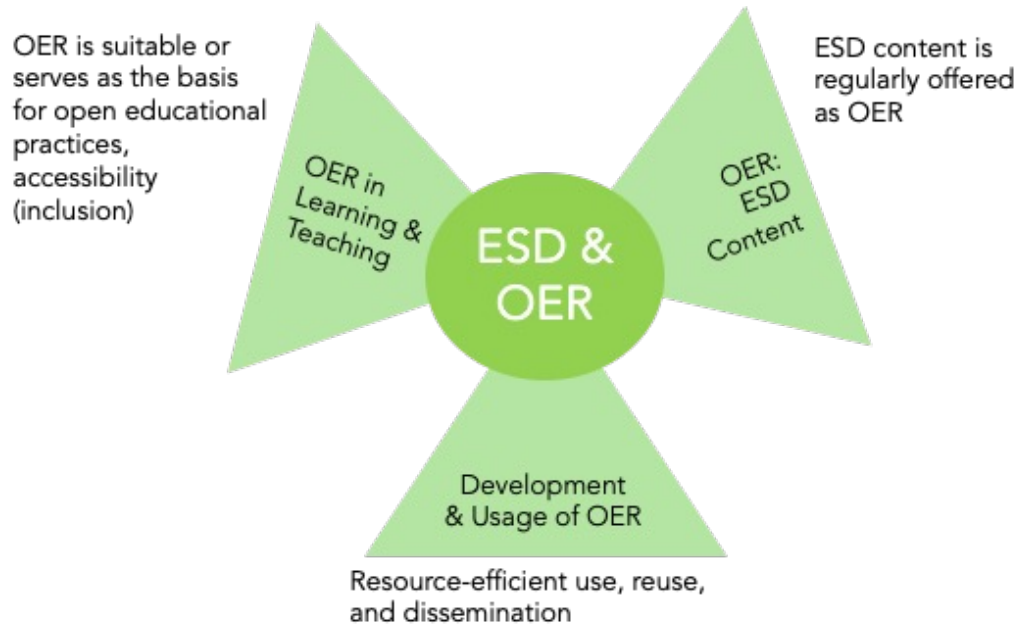
The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (CC-0)

"Education for Sustainable Development empowers learners to make informed decisions and take responsible actions for environmental integrity, economic viability and a just society, for present and future generations, while respecting cultural diversity. It is about lifelong learning and is an integral part of quality education. ESD is holistic and transformational education which addresses learning content and outcomes, pedagogy and the learning environment. It achieves its purpose by transforming society." (UNESCO, 2017)

Challenge: Sustainability concerning Educational Resources

- Ensuring Long-Term Resource Availability
- Ongoing Adaptation and Relevance
- Resource Efficiency (Re-Use)
- Cost-free access and opportunity to adapt materials for learning (e.g. in open educational approaches)
- Integration of Diverse Perspectives

OER and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)



Source: Translation of
Jakob et al., i.p.

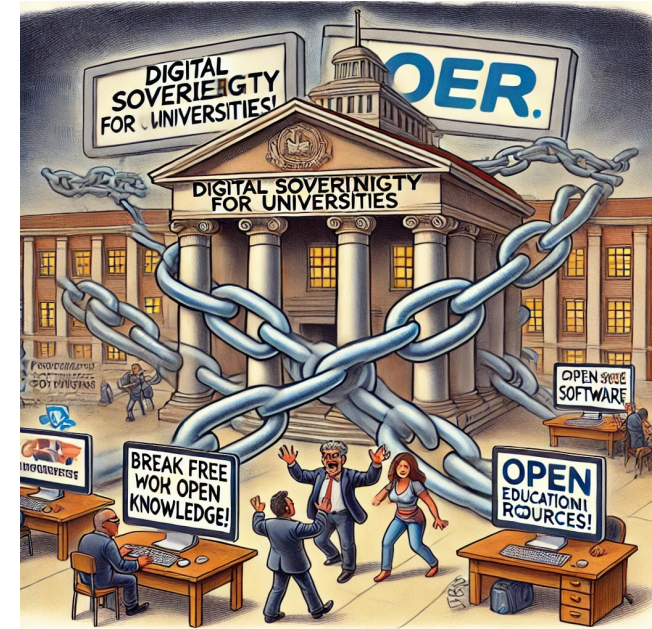
If open licenses are used ...



- Resource-efficiency
- Re-use possible
- Open practices are possible
- Supports accessibility
- (and a lot more...)

Challenge: Digital Sovereignty in Danger

- Dependence on Proprietary Platforms
- Lack of Open Infrastructure
- Data Privacy and Security Risks
- Restricted Possibility to Share Resources / Knowledge
- Influence of Corporate Interests
- Less possibilities for cooperations with other universities/partners



Digital Sovereignty through OER



THE ROLE OF OER FOR DIGITALLY SOVEREIGN UNIVERSITY

Independence from Commercial Platforms – OER reduce reliance on proprietary educational tools and materials.

Control over Educational Content – Universities decide how knowledge is created, shared, and preserved.

Interoperability & Open Standards – OER ensure compatibility across institutions and prevent vendor lock-in.

Alignment with Open Science – OER strengthen the open sharing of knowledge, reinforcing academic autonomy.

If open licenses are used ...



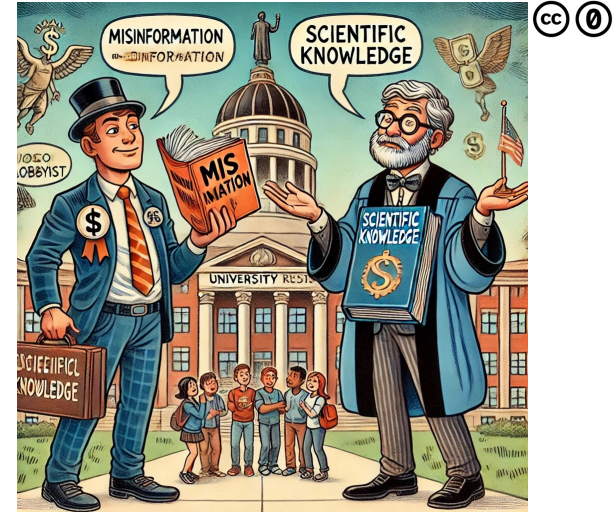
- Open formats are used, so not lock-in
- Full ownership is given (no commercially licensed materials which might restrict usage)
- Society (children, school, lifelong learners) can access free learning materials that are not/less influenced by enterprises/policies
- (and a lot more...)

Yet another argument for OER

Investing in OER is essential to ensure that society — children, students, and lifelong learners — has access to free educational materials that are shaped by scientific knowledge* rather than commercial interests or policy influences**

*this is the mission of universities worldwide (Austria: UG 2002)

** see Austrian National Education Report 2016



See: Baumgartner, P., Brandhofer, G., Ebner, M., Gradingner, P., Korte, M. (2016). Medienkompetenz fördern – Lehren und Lernen im digitalen Zeitalter. In: Bruneforth, M., Eder, F., Krainer, K., Schreiner, C., Seel, A. & Spiel C. (Hrsg.). (2016). Nationaler Bildungsbericht Österreich 2015, Band 2: Fokussierte Analysen bildungspolitischer Schwerpunktthemen. Graz: Leykam. S. 95-132
doi:10.17888/nbb2015-2-3

Discussion: Considering OER within Unite!

- Cm.2 publishes reports and presentation under CC BY 4.0
- Articles, if possible
- Task 2.3 publishes manuals and courses (e.g. the „How to use the Metacampus course“ at Metacampus) under CC BY 4.0
- Would be helpful for a lot of learning resources developed within Unite!



Want to know more about OER?

MOOC about OER in TWELVE
LANGUAGES
(all Unite! languages + more!)
<https://imoox.at/course/OERinHE>




The screenshot shows the iMooX website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'iMooX' logo, 'About iMooX', 'Partners', 'All courses', 'English (en)', and 'Log in'. Below the navigation bar is a large banner with a colorful illustration of a lightbulb, gears, a globe, and a book. The course title 'Open Educational Resources (OER) in Higher Education' is prominently displayed, along with the instructor names 'Graz University of Technology' and 'Martin Ebner & Sandra Schön'. A video thumbnail shows a man speaking in front of a whiteboard with the text 'OER Open Educational Resources'. The course details include 'Duration: 4 units', 'Unit: 2 hours', 'Availability: Unlimited', and 'Start Date: 6 May 2020'.

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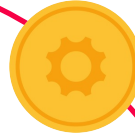
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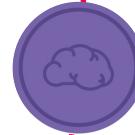
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