

Open Educational Resources in Poland

Conference report

The conference, *Open Educational Resources in Poland*, was organized on the 23rd of April, 2009 in the Column Hall of the Parliament of the Republic of Poland by the Coalition for Open Education (KOED). The conference was held under the honorary patronage of Bronisław Komorowski - the Marshal of the Parliament of the Republic of Poland.

The aim of the conference was to present the open education movement and the model of open educational materials for all levels of the educational process, to argue for the importance of open education in Poland, and to increase broad interest and involvement. This first-in-its-kind event, organized as a parliamentary conference, drew the attention of both government members and Parliament members to the issue of open education.

The conference was attended by 250 participants, including government officials, educators and scientists, librarians and NGO representatives. Among honorary participants were: Bronisław Komorowski, the Marshal of the Parliament; Katarzyna Hall, the Minister of Education, and several members of the Parliament: Krzysztof Tyszkiewicz, Andrzej Celiński, Marcin Zawila, Renata Butryn, Tadeusz Ross and Tadeusz Borowski.

Opening the conference, Bronisław Komorowski said: “I hope that the conference will result in a great advance regarding these issues, so that we will be closer to the world we dream of, in which knowledge is easily accessible”.

Speaking after him, Katarzyna Hall, Minister of Education declared Ministry's interest in open educational models as means of creating modern and effective education.

“Especially in small towns and villages [...] internet makes education more democratic, more accessible, so that important resources are available at any time”, said Hall.

The first session of the conference was devoted to highlighting the state of the global movement for open education and presenting achievements in the field of open educational resources development. Speeches were given by Susan D'Antoni from UNESCO and Richard Baraniuk from the Connexions project at Rice University. The second part of the conference concerned open education in Poland. Presentations were given by Marek Niezgódka from the Interdisciplinary Centre for Mathematical and Computational Modeling at the University of Warsaw, who spoke about the challenges of building open higher education and science in Poland; Krzysztof Stanowski from the Ministry of National Education and Grażyna Czetweryńska from the Institute of Interdisciplinary Research at University of Warsaw, who discussed the use of open models in the “Polish school” project, which coordinates Polish-language education for Polish students living abroad; Alek Tarkowski from the Interdisciplinary Centre for Mathematical and Computational Modeling at the University of Warsaw and Creative Commons Poland who presented legal and regulatory aspects of open education; and Tomasz Ganicz from the Wikimedia Poland Association, who spoke about open access to public information and data, treated as potential educational resources.

The conference ended with a debate, during which Members of the Parliament presented their viewpoints.

Krzysztof Tyszkiewicz focused on the issue of open school textbooks, as a means to revolutionize education in Poland, and an issue that concerns both students and their parents. “School textbooks currently cost several hundred złotych a year. Textbooks built in the open access model will provide a free alternative”, said Tyszkiewicz.

Andrzej Celiński spoke about that obligation of the government to provide open access to educational resources, especially in the light of long-term challenges that Poland will face. “Taking into account that social and intellectual capital, capital that has intellectual property as its source, is today a key form of capital, government – with its regulatory tools – cannot ignore its responsibilities in this field”, said Celiński. He also furthermore stressed the importance of quality control for educational materials and of cooperation between governmental bodies and third sector actors.

Marcin Zawila stressed the importance of legal reform in support of open education, as well as openness of other types of public content, such as audiovisual heritage. “Public mandate, an obligation for publicly funded works to constitute open resources, is the right direction for changes”, said Zawila and declared support for introducing such a mandate in Poland.

The conference proved the importance of further introducing open models into the Polish educational system, at all its level. More importantly, it proved the interest of government officials, members of the Parliament and educators in building together open education in Poland. As an outcome of the conference, KOED coalition will continue talks with relevant Ministries regarding open access to educational and scientific materials, as well as introducing an open mandate for publicly funded content.

The Coalition for Open Education (Koalicja Otwartej Edukacji – KOED, <http://koed.org.pl>) is a partnership of organizations founded at the end of 2008 to promote open education and science in Poland. Coalitions' founding institutions include the Modern Poland Foundation, the Polish Librarians Association, Wikimedia Poland Association and the Interdisciplinary Centre for Mathematical and Computational Modeling at the University of Warsaw.