

Open school data in European education systems

INTRODUCTION

The report, “Open school data in European education systems”, examines how open school data (OSD) initiatives are being developed and implemented across the states parties to the European Cultural Convention represented at the CDEDU. It offers an overview of the current landscape of OSD in Europe, identifying key practices, innovations, and challenges. The report is the result of a collaborative effort between UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP-UNESCO) and the Council of Europe’s ETINED Platform. Building on previous IIEP-UNESCO research in other world regions, it aims to support national-level conversations on how OSD can improve government transparency and accountability, and reduce corruption and fraud in education.

Intended for policymakers, education officials, civil society, and international partners, the report reviews the types of publicly available data, the governance models behind OSD initiatives, and their impact on education systems. It also highlights best practices and common barriers to effective implementation.

Findings are based on a thorough review of existing literature, a survey conducted in September 2024 involving all states parties, and in-depth interviews with representatives from five countries with advanced OSD practices. These insights provide valuable lessons for shaping effective and sustainable open data policies across the region.

This info note draws from the report “Open school data in European education systems”, authored by Muriel Poisson, IIEP-UNESCO, and Elira Jorgoni, consultant.

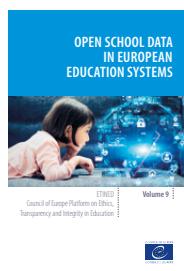


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Open school data refers to the practice of making school-level information openly available to the general public, either in paper or electronic format (Poisson, 2021). This data, which can be both quantitative and qualitative, can be used to monitor school services, ensure accountability of schools and education authorities, and support efforts toward more inclusive and equitable quality education.

It can be presented as school report cards that compile various education metrics at the school level, including funding (inputs), teacher attendance (processes), student achievement (outputs), and qualitative details such as community participation. It should be accurate, comprehensive, accessible to everyone, free of charge, and timely, with regular updates to maintain its relevance. Its freedom of use for various purposes, its comparability over time and interoperability are also key factors to consider.



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KEY FINDINGS OF THE REPORT

- 01 OSD initiatives are growing**, driven by broader efforts for transparency and accountability. Governments are using Educational Management Information Systems (EMIS) to make school-level data (e.g., financials, performance indicators) publicly accessible. However, the data's granularity and type vary by country, reflecting differences in governance, resources, and technology.
- 02 Implementation of OSD differs** across states parties. Countries like Estonia, France, Ireland, Lithuania, and the UK have established frameworks with comprehensive datasets, while others, are still developing similar systems.
Challenges include outdated technology, lack of data literacy, resistance to scrutiny, and concerns over data quality, privacy, or misuse, and risk of stigma for low-performing schools. Inconsistent or incomplete datasets are common issues, especially in countries with less advanced digital infrastructure.
- 03**
- 04 Innovative approaches** in countries like the Netherlands and the UK use advanced technologies (Application Programming Interface- APIs, AI, chatbots) for better data management. In Belgium and Cyprus, "open by default" policies automatically make data public unless exempted.
- 05 Increasing engagement** from parents, civil society, and local communities is noted. Initiatives in countries like Ireland and France aim to foster a data-driven decision-making culture, ensuring open data benefits a broader audience.
- Further improvements** are needed in areas like national data portals, data literacy programs, and standardised frameworks to measure the impact of OSD on educational outcomes.
- 06**



MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE REPORT



Develop basic principles and a guidance document on developing open school data



Improve the quality and comprehensiveness of educational data



Design public consultations and training programs



Integrate open school data concepts into school curriculums



Find a balance between promoting transparency and protecting sensitive data



Harness the power of emerging technologies such as AI, APIs, data analytics



Capture user feedback for tracking progress and impact



Develop an open school data maturity index at European level



Foster exchanges and peer learning between states parties

CASE EXAMPLES

The report highlights several good practices, offering detailed examples, among others:

- 01 Estonia** involves various stakeholders in developing its open data strategy, including government bodies, private sector participants, and civil society. In **Ireland**, establishing a network of open data Liaison Officers across public service organisations has contributed to promoting the publication and use of open data and addressing the needs of various users.
- 02** In countries like **Belgium** and **Cyprus**, collaborative policies have led to the adoption of "open by default" practices, making data automatically available to the public unless specific exemptions apply.
- 03 England** is recognised for its open data practices due to its comprehensive approach to data availability and accessibility. **Lithuania** and **Netherlands** have also emerged as leaders in OSD implementation. They leverage advanced technologies like APIs to facilitate data sharing and enhanced transparency.
- 04 France, Germany and Italy** are promoting data literacy through initiatives that train public officials, educators, or students on data use and interpretation, highlighting also a trend toward more participatory data ecosystems.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE REFERENCE DOCUMENTS



CM/REC(2022)18

Recommendation on countering education fraud and explanatory memorandum



CM/REC(2019)9

Recommendation on fostering a culture of ethics in the teaching profession



Explanatory Memorandum of this Recommendation



COUNCIL OF EUROPE · 2013

Ministerial Declaration on Governance and Quality Education



CM/REC(2012)13

Recommendation on ensuring quality education

FURTHER READINGS



POISSON, M · 2021

Open School Data: What Planners need to Know

Ethics and Corruption in Education. Paris: UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP-UNESCO)



POISSON, M · 2021

Developing open school data policies: Basic principles

Ethics and corruption in education. Paris: UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP-UNESCO)

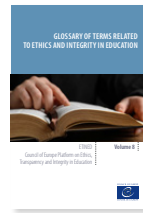


EUROPEAN UNION · 2019

Open Data Directive

Directive (EU) 2019/1024 on open data and the re-use of public sector information

ETINED PUBLICATIONS



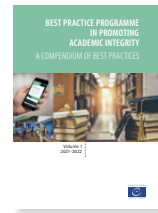
2024

Glossary of terms related to ethics and integrity in education



2023

Measures to counter education fraud: Legislation, practices and instruments



2022

Best practice programme in promoting academic integrity: A compendium of best practices



THE ETINED PLATFORM

ETINED is a network of specialists appointed by member states of the Council of Europe and states parties to the European Cultural Convention. Since its launch in 2015, the ETINED Platform has been dedicated to promoting a culture of ethics, transparency and integrity within the education sector. The Platform has produced guidelines aimed at ensuring ethical practices in the teaching profession and has developed targeted recommendations on academic integrity based on assessments and exchanges with stakeholders in the field.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE EDUCATION STRATEGY 2024-2030 “LEARNERS FIRST”

The report contributes to the implementation of the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy, reaffirmed at the 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe, which emphasise transparency, accountability, and youth participation in democratic processes, including education, and to Pillar II: Enhancing the social responsibility and responsiveness of education under the Council of Europe's Education Strategy 2024-2030 (“Learners First”).



LEARNERS FIRST

Council of Europe Education Strategy 2024-2030



THE ETICO PLATFORM

ETICO is a comprehensive capacity building programme on Ethics and Corruption in Education developed by IIEP-UNESCO since 2001. Its objectives are threefold: to produce new knowledge and facilitate the exchange of successful experiences; to strengthen national capacities in the use of diagnostic tools and strategies to fight corruption; and to promote policy dialogue on transparency issues in the education sector. It is aimed at education decision-makers, managers and planners, members of development agencies, and civil society representatives.



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