



## **Chapter VIII**

# **European National Educational School Authorities' Actions Regarding Open Content and Open Source Software in Education**

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## **Abstract**

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*This chapter provides an overview into policies in the area of e-learning that ten European countries, all members of European Schoolnet, have taken regarding open content and free and open source software (FOSS) to be used to support and enhance learning. Additionally, it elaborates on European Schoolnet's initiatives to support open learning resources exchange in Europe. European Schoolnet (EUN) promotes the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in European schools, acting as a gateway to national and regional educational authorities and school networks towards Europe. A variety of actions have been initiated by a*

*number of European educational authorities from analysis and feasibility studies to the development of educational software based on open source as well as open educational content.*

## Introduction

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European Schoolnet is a network of 27 national educational authorities in Europe in the area of compulsory education (K-12). European Schoolnet provides insight into the educational use of information and communications technologies (ICT) in European schools for policy-makers and education professionals. This goal is achieved through communication and information exchange at all levels of school education using innovative technologies, and by acting as a gateway to national and regional school networks.

In recent years, European Schoolnet and a number its members have, little by little, begun a trend towards awareness building, piloting, development, and the rolling-out of open source software programs for schools, as well as investigating open content as a possible addition to a more conventional content provision.

This chapter introduces some of these policy-level actions; however, it cannot be regarded as an exhaustive summary of policy initiatives in the field of ICT and education. There are two main focuses for the chapter, the policy initiatives and EUN initiatives.

First, the chapter introduces a number of emerging initiatives lead by ten EUN member countries in the area of open source and content for education. Initiatives are categorized in four main sections: awareness raising of Free Open Source Software (FOSS), development of LMS and learning platforms, promotion of the use of Linux on desktops and educational servers, and finally, the promotion of open content. The following countries are featured: Estonia, Spain, and Slovenia as an example of countries basing part of their policy initiatives and actions on open source development; Belgium's Flemish Community and the Netherlands, which run major campaigns to raise awareness of the FOSS issues; Ireland and Finland, as well as France, with smaller scale policy initiatives to familiarize schools with alternative solutions; and finally the UK and Lithuania carrying out feasibility studies with FOSS.

The second part presents two European Schoolnet's recent initiatives in this regard: Xplora, which promotes science education in Europe, and secondly, the EUN's Learning Resources Exchange, which promotes the use and reuse of educational content across Europe. The latter introduces the implementation of a digital rights management framework and briefs on the current development of a learning toolbox to support collaborative learning based on open source development.

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