• Type of session requested:  
  **Presentation**  
• Title of session:  
  Ten years of OER policy in France: impact and outcomes  
• Names, titles, and institution or organization for all presenters  
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• Goals or intended outcomes  
  The talk aims at assessing ten years of public policy in France about OER and at describing how the strategy has evolved over time due to its impact and new challenges.  
• Clear description of what will be covered  
  Intended audience (for example, experienced open education professionals, those new to the field, administrators, general): general audience
This presentation aims at describing how the seven “Thematic Digital Universities” (UNTs) initiated and supported by the Ministère de l’Éducation nationale, de l’Enseignement supérieur et de la Recherche (MENESR) - via its service dedicated to ICT supported learning and teaching - enable and underpin open educational resources (OERs) development and dissemination) in French higher education. The role of this service of the MENESR is to impulse mutualisation between universities by supporting a structuring policy and the promotion of standards of interoperability.

In 2003, 82 universities (73 in 2014 due to fusion of institutions), together with hundreds of “engineering schools”, built the French panorama of higher education (HE). The universities offer a large range of subjects, from humanities, law or management to mathematics, chemistry and physics, including health sciences. In 2014, 2.4 Millions of students are studying in French higher education, from bachelor’s degree to Phd. These universities are since 2014 organized in COMUE (consortium of HE institutions at a territorial level), kind of federal structure of universities. The law LRU¹ (08/10/2007) defines the autonomy of each university in terms of budget, human resources management and its real estate property. Each university defines its own digital strategy, with an expected objective of mutualisation and interoperability of its realisations.

In order to enhance e-learning and e-teaching deployment, and to answer questions of high importance in French higher education -such as how to facilitate the work of teachers who have to develop e-contents, how to provide learners with additional reliable resources, how to ensure that pedagogical resources will survive to technical changes - the French ministry launched in 2003 an initiative called “Université Numérique Thématique” (Digital Thematic University, UNT).

An UNT aimed at designing a disciplinary pedagogical pool, viewed as a repository of the French digital pedagogical capital. However, the objective of making resources available and visible to the users led to many challenges as e.g. reaching many users, managing rights and adopting standards, developing trust in provided resources.

Created within 2004 and 2007, each UNT was in charge at the country level of a disciplinary field. It had to manage the coordinated development and the broad diffusion of thematic digital contents that are labelled by the UNTs at a pedagogical, scientific and technical level.

The goal of UNTs is to share learning and educational resources in interoperable systems accessible through each digital universities website, their federative portal and from the institutions’ digital workspaces.

The seven thematic universities are the following:

- health and sport sciences (UNF3S), http://www.unf3s.org
- engineer sciences (UNIT), http://www.unit.eu
- law and political sciences (UNJF), http://www.unjf.org
- economics and management (AUNEGE), http://www.aunege.org

These seven UNT cover the whole spectrum of thematic fields that are taught in French universities. They offer several thousands of resources (more than 24 000 resources are available at the moment) with various granularity levels. The available pedagogical resources are of various nature (case studies, lessons, exercises, simulations, virtual experimentations, additional materials to lessons, pedagogical kits, self assessment, etc.) and various formats (pdf, audio, video, interactive document, virtual experiment, simulation, serious game, 3D …) .... They are designed either for teachers or for

¹ « Libertés et responsabilités des universités »
students and can be accessed from the UNT’ portals. In order to make it easier for people to seek resources, a portal dedicated to digital university has been implemented.

In 2003, a key aspect to be taken into account was to provide the community of learners and teachers with high-level and easily available contents. It was also of first importance to testify the quality and the reliability of the digital contents that could be used, whatever is the way they are produced (collaborative production of contents via semantic wikis, collaborative diffusion of knowledge or information via social networks, usual productions of digital contents...). There was thus a mandatory requirement for labelled and testified contents (as a major difference with many resources that could be found at that time on Internet), especially by students, who wanted to be sure that the resources they access are pertinent and reliable. The organisation in thematic digital libraries was a way to guarantee the quality of the contents provided, at the difference with major international initiatives for open digital pedagogical libraries (google for example or collaborative encyclopaedias). The fact that teachers from several universities collaboratively produce contents led to a larger universality of the resulting resources, and then a better re-usability by other teachers. Furthermore independent experts of the field labelled resources in order to testify the scientific pertinence and the reliability of the contents. It was of major interest, as learners want to be confident in the reliability of the contents they access. Furthermore, pedagogical specialists testify the technical and pedagogical quality of the resources. It is a guarantee for teachers that the available contents can run in all standard environments, and that they could be easily reused in other pedagogical and technical contexts.

Whatever is the means chosen, it was a heavy and costly task to produce pertinent and attractive digital contents. Therefore it seemed mandatory to encourage collaborative production and broad dissemination. Then, another need was to support mutualisation of all these activities. Furthermore, the collaborative production of common resources impacts the way to produce: it enhances the use of common tools (for example “chaînes éditoriales” such as scenari² or ChainEdit³ for content production, ORI⁴ for combining a network of portals) to ensure interoperability and reusability of the contents. More precisely it encourages the dissemination of common standards (for example SupLom⁵ for indexing, OAI⁶). The last but not the least, communities of practitioners (teachers, pedagogical engineers, technical developers, audiovisual professionals, …) have emerged.

These three aspects (design of national repositories of open pedagogical resources – they are creative commons licensed -, label and certification of contents and mutualisation of their production) were necessary and basic conditions to create innovative systems for e-learning and e-teaching. But clearly, the usage of these OERs was very low, as it can be stated in most universities.

In the year 2011, as the digital panorama of the French universities has considerably evolved since the creation of the UNT (the autonomy rule of the French universities, the broad dissemination of digital applications in everyday life, the emergence of new tools such as social networks or serious games, the fact that everyone can be content producers, the multiplication of initiatives at an international level…), it was time to assess the impact of the digital thematic universities. This study had another objective, that is to determine the real usages of the available resources of the digital thematic universities. The main trends and results of this assessment will be discussed within the presentation.

But it clearly emerged the following aspects:

- The need to make the UNTs’ mission evolving, from production to usage, from resources providing to services offer.
- The necessity to better articulate the role of UNTs with universities requirement.

² http://scenari-platform.org
³ http://www.chainedit.fr
⁴ http://www.or-i-oai.org/
⁵ Version for higher education of LOM, and its French declination SupLom-fr
⁶ http://www.openarchives.org/
• The necessity to broader disseminate the OERs at an international level.

Their missions have then be redefined from content production to OERs facilitators, from national to international level, from OERs development to open education support, and some actions have been launched (new national projects about open software for development or use of OERs, quality of online contents and recommender systems, hub between lifelong learning demands and universities, opening of an OCW France, definition of scenarii of usage with universities, development of several MOOCs based on OERs…) are some examples of the new orientations of UNTs. This presentation will be the opportunity to state their role in 2014 and to discuss the new challenges they have to face.