

ADULT EDUCATION AND OER 2015 EU COUNTRY UPDATE: IRELAND

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Ireland is a small Member State, with a population of around 4.7 million. It has several long-established universities and a number of other tertiary providers, the Institutes of Technology.

Adult Education

Several tertiary providers now offer distance learning courses to adults, including Dublin City University (whose Open Education Unit now incorporates the functions of the former *National Distance Education Centre, OSCAIL*)¹ and the Institute of Technology at Sligo. In addition there is a private tertiary provider Hibernia College,² very active in distance learning, including for secondary teachers in Ireland and across the UK. There is also the Open College³ and various e-learning services from SOLAS, the Further Education and Training Authority for Ireland.⁴

The *National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning* has since 2012 played a coordinating role in e-learning and OER for post-secondary institutions.⁵

Government policy states that 'Lifelong learning, community education and vocational training for jobseekers will be a high priority' (Bacsich, 2014).

Copyright

Irish copyright law includes a provision for 'fair dealing', similar to that used by other countries. Further, Since 2005 Government organisations, local authorities and state-sponsored bodies are obliged by law to have a permissive reuse policy for copyrighted material under the Directive on the re-use of public sector information (Bacsich, 2014).

Creative Commons has an affiliate in Ireland, hosted by University College Cork.

OER in Adult Education

The most notable provider of OER is **ALISON**, based in Galway.⁶ Launched in 2007, its core objective is to enable people to gain basic education and workplace skills, which it claims are 'standards-based and certified'. It has registered over 5 million learners.

There are now several MOOC providers including Trinity College Dublin (a member of the FutureLearn consortium), Dublin Institute of Technology and IT Sligo – but MOOCs remain a relatively small activity in Ireland, compared for example with Scotland.

The **National Digital Learning Resources** service (NDLR) is a 'free and open online community of resources designed primarily for faculty of higher education in Ireland to share their learning materials'. However, active development of this has now ceased.⁷

¹ <http://dcu.ie/openeducation/index.shtml>

² <http://hiberniacollege.com>

³ <http://www.theopencollege.com>

⁴ <http://www.ecollege.ie/moodle/>

⁵ <http://www.teachingandlearning.ie>

⁶ <http://alison.com>

Quality for OER

The Irish Quality Agency for Higher Education, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI),⁸ is a full member of ENQA. It recently (QQI, 2013) published a *Green Paper on the Recognition of Prior Learning*, which raised key issues relevant to OER and MOOCs.

⁷ <http://www.ndlr.ie>

⁸ <http://www.qqi.ie>