



COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING

# **National Open Educational Resources Policy for Malta**



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## Abbreviations

AEI	Autonomous Educational Institutions
COL	Commonwealth of Learning
DES	Directorate for Educational Services
DQSE	Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education
ECDL	European Computer Driving Licence
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation Scheme
EEA	European Economic Area
EU	European Union
FES	Foundation for Education Services
FTS	Foundation for Tomorrow's Schools
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
ITS	Institute for Tourism Studies
MCAST	Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology
MEDE	Ministry for Education and Employment
MOOC	Massively Online Open Course
NSO	National Statistics Office
OE	Open Education
OEP	Open Educational Practices
OER	Open Educational Resources
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
SURVEYLANG	European Survey on Language Competences
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UoM	University of Malta
VET	Vocational Education and Training

## I. Executive Summary

UNESCO has issued two ministerial declarations whereby countries, including Malta, have committed to fostering awareness and use of open educational resources (OER), and to launching national OER policies.

In 2012, the European Commission published a recommendation on access to and preservation of scientific information, encouraging all EU Member States to put publicly funded research results in the public domain in order to strengthen science and the knowledge-based economy. In May 2016, European ministers endorsed clear ambitions for open access during the Competitiveness Council and agreed on setting a target for reaching full open access to scientific publications by 2020.

In a 2017 study, the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission found that most Member States have implemented some kind of initiative with regard to open education. The study identified four types of policies for OER in the 28 EU Member States:

- Policies focusing specifically on opening up education through the promotion of OER and open educational practices (OEP).
- Policies relating to general ICT for learning with some open education component.
- Comprehensive strategic educational policies with some open education component.
- Policies designed as national open government plans with some open education component.

The OER movement originated in the belief that education and knowledge are public goods that should be freely accessible to all. Studies in recent years have found concrete benefits to widespread OER adoption throughout educational systems. Results across multiple studies indicate that students generally achieve the same learning outcomes when OER are utilised and simultaneously save significant amounts of money.<sup>1</sup>

A 2013 white paper on OER<sup>2</sup> found that OER can

- radically reduce costs spent on textbooks;
- deliver greater learning efficiency in terms of time to complete courses and improve grades;
- promote continuous improvement in instruction and personalised learning;
- encourage translation and localisation of content; and
- offer equal access to knowledge for all.

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<sup>1</sup> Hilton, J. (2016). Open educational resources and college textbook choices: A review of research on efficacy and perceptions. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 64(4), 573–590.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11423-016-9434-9>

<sup>2</sup> The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. (2013). *Open educational resources: Breaking the lockbox on education*. Retrieved from [https://www.hewlett.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/OER%20White%20Paper%20Nov%2022%202013%20Final\\_0.pdf](https://www.hewlett.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/OER%20White%20Paper%20Nov%2022%202013%20Final_0.pdf)

A survey on governments' OER policies globally, published by the Commonwealth of Learning and UNESCO,<sup>3</sup> found that governments see the following benefits of OER (ranked in order of importance):

- Open and flexible learning opportunities.
- Increased efficiency and quality of learning resources.
- Cost-efficiency.
- Innovative potential.

## **1. Current State of OER in Malta**

Malta does not currently have an OER policy or strategy. Looking to the future, the National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020<sup>4</sup> embraces open education and OER to promote connected learning. The document sets out the strategy and contains several recommendations for raising awareness about OER. A report to the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE) by the Working Group on Post-Secondary Education and the Future of Education presents a series of recommendations,<sup>5</sup> with number 13 focusing on OER: “Use Open Education Resources and MOOCs to redesign and deliver accessible, competency-based curriculum content” (p. 157).

## **2. Why OER is Important for Malta**

MEDE has an explicit aim of making Malta a centre of excellence for digital education, as well as an island lab for testing innovative pedagogies and technologies for the future of education. OER are seen as key enablers of digital educational innovation and as such constitute an important pillar of the overall digital education strategy.

The many secondary benefits of OER include:

- increasing the number of educational opportunities available to Maltese students;
- improving the government's return on investment for textbooks;
- contributing to Malta's soft power by acting as a vehicle for the export of Maltese identity and culture; and
- increasing the sharing of best practices between teachers and academics at all levels of education.

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<sup>3</sup> Hoosen, S. (2012). Survey on governments' open educational resources (OER) policies.

<sup>4</sup> Ministry for Education and Employment. (2015). *Malta National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020*. Malta. Retrieved from

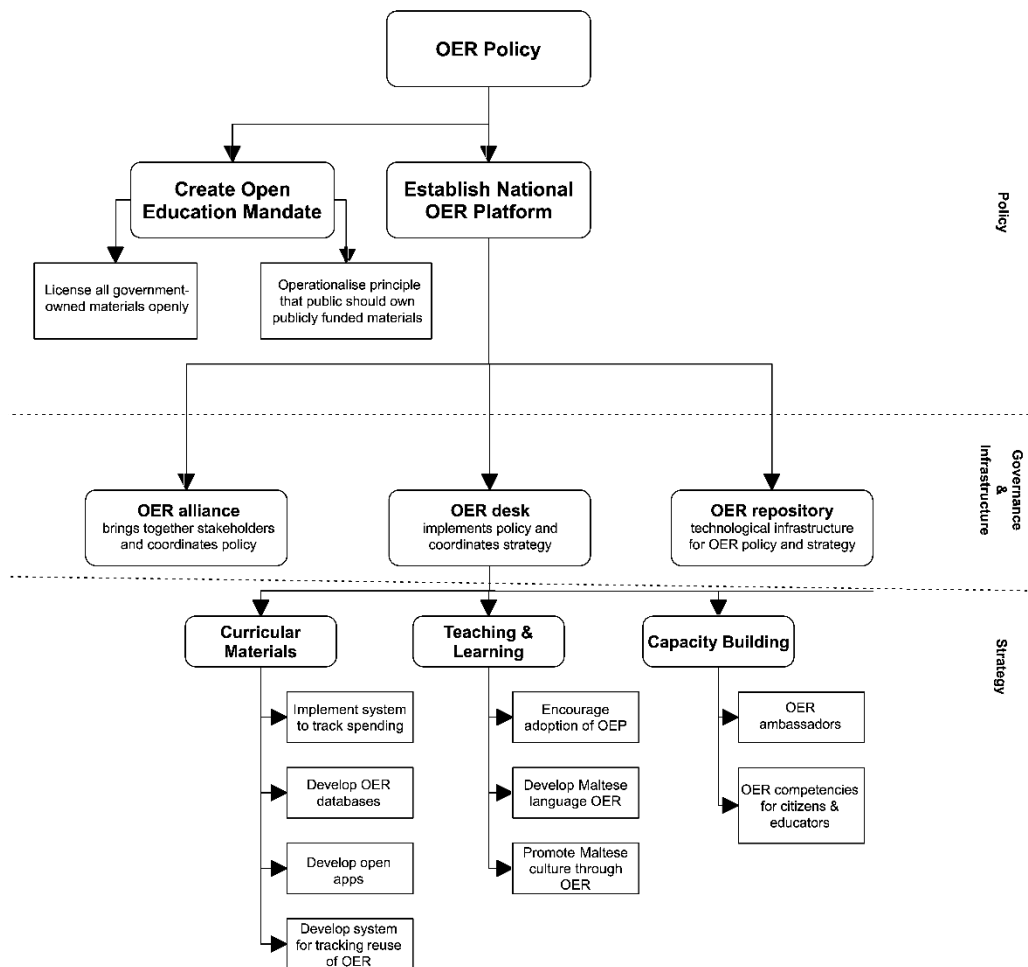
<https://education.gov.mt/en/Documents/Malta%20National%20Lifelong%20Learning%20Strategy%202020.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> The Working Group on the Future of Post-Secondary Education. (2017). *The Working Group on the Future of Post-Secondary Education: Report to the Minister for Education and Employment*.



### 3. Implementation

The suggested policy describes the following actions:



### 4. Potential Issues

Under Maltese copyright law, all copyright of educational resources lies with the authors, including materials produced with public funds by public servants. This is incompatible with the core principle of an OER policy, namely that materials produced with public funds should be placed within the public domain.

Most OER policies include a specific clause that states: “The copyright of all materials produced with public funds shall lie with the government.” However, this approach is not being recommended because removing authors’ rights, even if doing so is in the public interest, is seen as politically unfeasible.

While the OER policy sets up an open mandate for all educational resources whose copyright is owned by the government, the government effectively does not currently own the rights to any educational resources.

Stakeholders therefore recommend extensive consultation to create a separate copyright policy that clarifies ownership rights over teaching, learning and research materials produced with public funds.

## II. Introduction: The Status of Education in Malta<sup>6</sup>

The Republic of Malta is a southern European island country consisting of an archipelago in the Mediterranean Sea. It lies 80 km south of Italy, 284 km east of Tunisia and 333 km north of Libya. At over 316 km<sup>2</sup> and with a population of just under 450,000, Malta is one of the world's smallest and most densely populated countries. Malta became a full member state of the European Union in 2004.

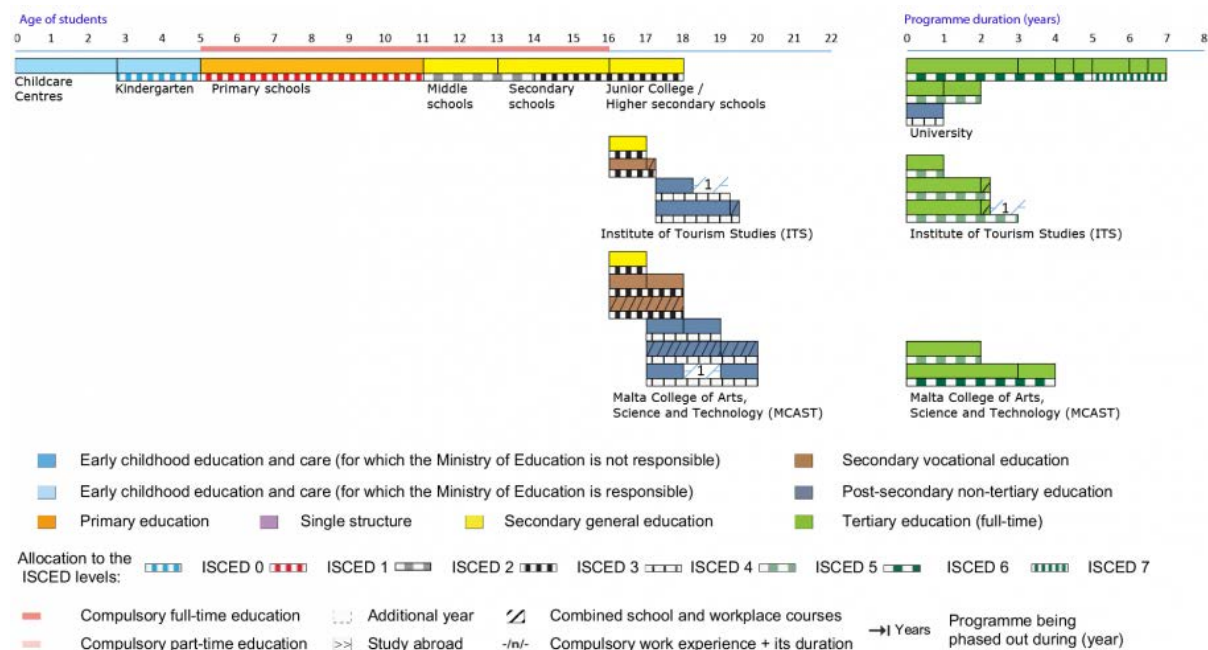
### 1. About the Education System

Responsibility for the education system lies with MEDE. Education is provided by state, church (predominantly Catholic) and independent schools.

According to data available from UNESCO, the Maltese educational population and participation rates are as follows:

Level	Population	Net Enrollment Rate
Pre-primary	8,406	98.64%
Primary	24,366	97.57%
Secondary	29,396	89.48%
Tertiary	27,293	48.84%

### Structure of the System



Source: Eurydice 2016

<sup>6</sup> All information in this section is compiled from publicly available data submitted by MEDE to the Eurydice database of educational systems.

**Early childhood education and care**, available for children from the age of three months up to two years and nine months, is provided at centres run by both the state and private entities. As of April 2014, families with both parents in full-time or part-time employment or in education are entitled to free childcare. Children between the ages of two years and nine months and five years attend kindergarten classes, which are operated by state, church and independent schools.

Compulsory education is distributed over 11 years and covers ages five to 16. It consists of two cycles: the primary cycle (age five to 11) and the secondary cycle (age 11 to 16), which comprises middle schools (from age 11 to 13) and secondary schools (from age 13 to 16). Around 50% of students in compulsory education attend state schools, another 36% go to church schools and around 14% are in independent schools.

**Primary education** consists of a six-year programme that addresses general and vocational themes. Students are streamed in the last two years and sit for the National End of Primary Benchmark Assessment in Year 6 to determine their level of education.

As of 2014, co-education has been introduced in the secondary cycle. The phasing in of **middle schools** (age 11 to 13) has ensured smaller school communities, resulting in more individual attention and a more caring environment that promotes better student-teacher relationships. Parent involvement is also encouraged. The curriculum addresses general and vocational skills.

All **secondary schools** (age 13 to 16) provide general education courses as well as options for students who want to follow a vocational career path. At the end of secondary education, students are awarded a Secondary School Certificate & Profile (SSC&P) that recognises formal, non-formal and informal education. Students may sit for the SEC exams that are a prerequisite for taking up many of the programmes available at the upper-secondary and post-secondary levels.

The Maltese educational system is largely centralised due to the size of the country. However, since the establishment of the college system in 2005, a certain amount of decentralisation has been introduced. Primary, middle and secondary schools within the college system are managed by college principals and the Council of Heads. Funds are handled by the central authorities through the college principals, as is the curriculum, which is drawn up by the Department of Curriculum Management. The Senior Management Team of the schools, however, can initiate projects and programmes relevant to their school ethos. They may also decide on topics for the professional development of educational staff.

Following compulsory education, students can choose to follow either a general or a vocational **post-secondary education** path (age 16 to 18). General education programmes and some vocational education programmes are intended to lead to tertiary education. The main institutions at the post-secondary level are the Junior College Malta, the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST) and the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS), the latter providing hospitality courses.

The University of Malta (UoM), also an autonomous institution, offers **tertiary general education** programmes ranging from certificate and undergraduate level to doctoral level. Tertiary vocational education is provided by MCAST's University College. It is

envisaged that ITS will start to provide degree courses as well. Private organisations also provide post-secondary and tertiary education.

## **2. Access and Equity**

The government's education policy is underscored by two main premises: equity and quality. This commitment is evidenced by an inclusive policy at all levels of education and the provision of free education from early childhood education and care to tertiary education in state institutions, except for students from non-EU/EEA countries. The state subsidises church schools, which do not charge tuition fees, and grants tax rebates to parents whose children attend independent schools.

Students in full-time post-secondary and tertiary education up to first-degree level are eligible to receive financial support in the form of:

- an annual grant provided on a smart-card and distributed annually; the smart-card can be used to pay for educational resources such as textbooks and computer equipment; and
- a stipend given every four weeks.

Such support contributes to cover part of students' educational expenses and is granted regardless of the family's financial situation.

## **3. Quality**

Quality assurance within the Maltese education system falls within the remit of MEDE, whose aim is to establish and maintain standards in the context of the National Qualifications Framework. This education quality assurance responsibility is then delegated to the following entities:

- The Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education<sup>7</sup> (DQSE), responsible for the quality and standards in education of all schools attended by students from the ages of three to 16.
- The National Commission for Higher Education<sup>8</sup> (NCFHE), responsible for the quality and assurance of further and higher education.
- The Malta Qualifications Council<sup>9</sup>, responsible for the National Qualifications Framework.<sup>10</sup>

Quality assurance in schools is also carried out by education officers, who are responsible for monitoring the teaching and learning of a subject, mainly through classroom visits. Reviews are also carried out at a number of key points in a teacher's career: two years after graduation, when teachers are confirmed and awarded a Permanent Teacher's Warrant, and then every eight years thereafter, when teachers progress from one salary scale to the next.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.mecf.gov.mt/Page.aspx?pid=218>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.nche.gov.mt/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.mqc.gov.mt/descriptors-key-competences?!=1>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.mqc.gov.mt/malta-qualifications-framework>

The NCFHE accredits and reviews the quality of institutions in line with European norms, and in line with standards that reflect the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. This means that quality assurance is maintained via site visits conducted by independent review teams every few years.

#### **4. National Agencies in Education**

The main objective of Maltese education policy is to offer all citizens equal opportunities for quality education. MEDE is the highest authority and is responsible for all publicly funded education in Malta. In view of Malta's size, there is no regional level of government, and no regional funding takes place in the Maltese educational system. However, public schools receive capital funds that are administered on a school level.

The ministry is responsible for preparing educational legislation, taking all necessary decisions and managing its share of the state budget for the government. Policy is defined through educational legislation, various development documents and the state budget. MEDE's current portfolio includes policies on education, employment and training, youth and sport, research and innovation, and science and technology.

The top civil servant in the ministry is the Permanent Secretary. Three director generals (DGs) assist the Permanent Secretary in administration duties. The DGs administer three main directorates of education: the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education (DQSE), the Directorate for Educational Services (DES) and the Directorate for Corporate Services (DCS). The DQSE is responsible for setting and monitoring standards and ensuring the quality of teaching and learning in both state and non-state schools, and the DES manages the provision of the physical infrastructure and resources, as well as support services to colleges, staff, students and their parents. The DCS provides a central support service and coordinates the corporate activities of the departments falling under MEDE.

DQSE is supported by three directors: a Director responsible for the Curriculum Management Department<sup>11</sup>, a Director for eLearning<sup>12</sup> and a Director responsible for the Quality Assurance Department<sup>13</sup> (QAD). DES is supported by three directors: the Director of the Student Services Department<sup>14</sup> (SSD), the Director Human Resources Department (HRD) and the Director, School Resources Department (SRD).

State college networks were set up in September 2005. Currently there are ten state college networks, each made up of a number of primary and secondary schools. Each network has the same managerial structure, and each school within the network has its own head of school and staff. Each college has a college principal, who facilitates the whole network and chairs a council of heads of schools making up the network. Each

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<sup>11</sup> <http://curriculum.gov.mt/en/Pages/Home.aspx>

<sup>12</sup> <http://elearning.skola.edu.mt/>

<sup>13</sup> <http://education.gov.mt/en/education/quality-assurance/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>14</sup> <http://education.gov.mt/en/education/student-services/Pages/default.aspx>

public school has a school council made up of parents, students (when they are 16 years of age or older) and teachers who have the opportunity to work together to improve the school environment and make schools a better place where students can be educated holistically. Members sitting on school councils are selected by regular school council elections held every two years. The school councils provide consultation to the school's senior management team.

Other entities, namely the Research and Development Department<sup>15</sup>, the Directorate for Lifelong Learning<sup>16</sup>, the Directorate for EU Affairs, the Programme Implementation Directorate and the Early School Leaving Director, fall under the direct responsibility of the Permanent Secretary.

The Research and Development Department<sup>17</sup> (RDD) conducts research on a local level and administers international surveys such as PIRLS, PISA, SURVEYLANG and TIMSS. These assess student achievement in different educational areas. In addition, RDD gathers statistical data from and about schools and initiates research proposals to help support policy development and initiatives by MEDE. Indeed, RDD is the focal point where statistics about education in Malta are collected and collated. These data are then used as feedback for clearer planning and shaping of education policy according to the priorities of Maltese society. This department also houses the Eurydice National Unit (Malta).

The Directorate for Lifelong Learning<sup>18</sup> within MEDE offers adult learning classes in several areas of knowledge. Indeed, the Adult Learning Unit within the Directorate for Lifelong Learning offers a vast range of courses throughout the academic year in different evening centres, local councils and NGOs. These courses range from academic to information technology, literacy, numeracy, crafts, leisure and creative arts, amongst others. The directorate is also contributing towards a strong base of high-level graduates by offering scholarships in several priority sectors of the knowledge-based economy.

The Directorate for EU Affairs in the Ministry for Education and Employment is entrusted with the task of coordinating and drafting the ministry's positions in EU and other international fora, as well contributing to the drawing up of the ministry's policies. Furthermore, the directorate coordinates the ministry's actions and responses in connection with EU-related documentation, such as proposals, communications, reports, questionnaires and general correspondence. Feedback to other ministries is also provided when this is requested. The directorate also coordinates the participation of ministry officials in various meetings taking place abroad.

The Programme Implementation Directorate coordinates policy ideas promoted by the different entities falling within the remit of the Ministry for Education and Employment and plans and budgets for the necessary resources to implement such policies.

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<sup>15</sup> <http://researchanddevelopment.gov.mt/en/Pages/rdd.aspx>

<sup>16</sup> <http://lifelonglearning.gov.mt/>

<sup>17</sup> <http://researchanddevelopment.gov.mt/en/Pages/rdd.aspx>

<sup>18</sup> <http://lifelonglearning.gov.mt/>

In 2001, the Foundation for Educational Services (FES) was created. Indeed, the Foundation aims to: develop and manage innovative prevention and early intervention services and programmes that ensure the provision of quality education for all students at risk of school failure and social exclusion; develop and manage educational programmes for parents that enable them to meet the challenges of nurturing and supporting their children’s development; contribute to the meeting of non-formal lifelong learning needs of citizens; develop schools as community learning centres; and promote and disseminate educational research and publications on good-practice approaches. FES has developed four core educational support programmes focusing on the fields of literacy and family literacy, namely the NWAR Programme, the Hilti Programme, the Parents-in-Education Programme and the Assist Programme: a capacity building of schools initiative. Currently FES manages SmartKids childcare centres, Klabb 3–16 centres and the Youth.Inc Programme.

In May 2001, the Government of Malta constituted the Foundation for Tomorrow’s Schools<sup>19</sup> (FTS) as an institution that collaborates with the education authorities to develop and manage innovative systems for the construction, refurbishment and maintenance of schools and other educational institutions. Indeed, FTS was set up following a cabinet decision, with the main objective of transforming primary and secondary schools into “Tomorrow’s Schools” in line with the guiding principles of the national curriculum requirements. The primary objective of the FTS is to offer an alternative, more efficient and cost-effective approach to undertaking and financing the ongoing development, upgrading and refurbishment of state schools and converting them from “Today’s Schools” into “Tomorrow’s Schools.”

The Department of Curriculum Management (DCM) oversees curriculum management, student assessment, classroom support related to teaching and learning, textbook provision and teacher training. The Assessment for Learning<sup>20</sup> unit provides support for teachers in the areas of teaching and learning, through formative assessment procedures. The Educational Assessment Unit also monitors national levels of achievement through national benchmarks, end-of-year examinations and the moderation of school-based assessment (carried out by subject education officers).

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<sup>19</sup> <http://www.fts.com.mt/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://curriculum.gov.mt/en/Assessment/Assessment-for-Learning/Pages/default.aspx>

### **III. ICT in Education in Malta<sup>21</sup>**

#### **1. Status of ICT in Education (Based on UNESCO Indicators)**

In 1992, the University of Malta and the Education Division developed a National ICT Strategy. This was used as a roadmap for integrating ICT in the curriculum. In 1994, computers were introduced into secondary schools. Each secondary school had 12 PCs installed in a computer lab, with an average of two labs in each school. Teachers had been trained during the previous summer, and in-service training continued throughout the following years. ICT was phased in gradually year by year and integrated with three subjects: math, English and social studies. All ICT teachers were encouraged to undergo professional development, and ICT diploma courses were designed to upgrade the teachers' ICT academic qualifications. At the same time, a small unit of teachers was set up to support and create content for ICT in secondary schools.

In 1995, computers were introduced into primary schools, with four computers in each class. Primary teachers were also trained and each given a laptop. The Department of Technology in Education was set up, and support was extended to the primary sector. In 2001, computer studies was introduced as an option in secondary schools and a year later ICT as a separate subject was changed to the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL)<sup>22</sup> course.

To cater for these changes, more computers were introduced and more labs set up. In 2008, laptops were deployed to all teachers (primary and secondary), and all computers in schools were upgraded.

Today, Malta can boast impressive statistics on ICT in education:

- All schools have high-bandwidth broadband Internet connections.
- All students from Year 4 onward are provided with a tablet computer.
- Nearly all classrooms are equipped with interactive whiteboards and/or projectors.
- At the higher education level, all institutions have bring-your-own device policies, and students are provided with grants to cover purchase of such devices.

The ICT in Education policy serves mainly to support in-class studies — distance education is essentially non-existent.

In primary education, ICT is not taught as a separate subject but is integrated in a cross-curricular approach, mainly based on the use of eLearning tools. Peripatetic teachers are responsible for this. At secondary school level, ICT is more focused on a subject-based approach. A weekly ICT lesson is taught throughout the five-year programme of studies. This subject covers the ECDL<sup>23</sup> curriculum/certification, preparing students to become digitally competent.

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<sup>21</sup> This section draws heavily on the European Schoolnet 2015 Country Report on ICT in Education for Malta, available at

<http://www.eun.org/documents/411753/828792/Country+Report+Malta.pdf/71770d81-31d4-478f-a22b-471f77515a0b>

<sup>22</sup> See <http://www.ecdl.org>

<sup>23</sup> See <http://www.ecdl.org>



The assessment takes place as an online mock exam that students have to pass, followed by the actual Enlight ECDL exam. Scores are automatically calculated and generated remotely by the ECDL database system, and the certification is awarded accordingly.

For grades three to eight, reusable learning resources have been designed for:

- Maltese
- Maths
- English
- Science
- Social studies
- Geography
- History

These are linked to related learning objectives in the respective curricula.

The ICT knowledge of secondary teachers is already tested and verified during the teachers' selection phase, but no ongoing assessment of ICT use takes place. Regular in-service training programmes provide support to school leaders.

## **2. National and International Projects and Initiatives**

### **One Tablet per Child**

Malta has taken steps to improve basic and digital skills in schools. Following the positive evaluation of a 2015 pilot project for using mobile technology in primary schools as part of the “One Tablet per Child” initiative, in December 2016, every child in Year 4 (i.e., nine years old) was provided with a tablet computer intended to help improve reading, writing, numeracy and digital literacy skills. Training was provided to 26 specialised teachers who in turn trained 473 Year 4 teachers and learning support assistants during the September 2016 in-service teacher training.

### **Blockchain in Education**

The government has launched a pilot project to explore the possibility of issuing educational certificates on the blockchain. The project will see diplomas at MCAST, training certificates at ITS, and equivalence statements, accreditation and licensure from the NCFHE, all issued on the emerging technology this year. Malta is the first country in the world to take the leap, and a government spokesman has said future applications of the technology are also being explored.

### **Groningen Declaration**

The Groningen Declaration seeks common ground in best serving the academic and professional mobility needs of citizens worldwide by bringing together key stakeholders in the Digital Student Data Ecosystem.

## **IV. Open Educational Resources in Malta**

### **1. Overview of OER**

As mentioned earlier in this report, the National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020 promotes connected learning by embracing open education and OER. The Strategy makes several recommendations for raising awareness about OER. In particular, Strategy 5 is to embrace OER for connected learning, emphasising that it is important to observe

the European Commission’s call for EU-level cooperation on OER as the platform from which to push reforms towards the adoption of open learning environments within adult education. This will involve the development of a sound policy framework for the introduction of innovative learning and teaching practices through technologies in schools, universities, VET and adult learning institutions. There is a significant opportunity to re-think the role of digital technologies within adult learning institutions. (p. 32)

The full list of actions on OER linked to Strategy 5 of the Lifelong Learning Strategy are attached as Appendix 2 of this document.

The report to MEDE by the Working Group on Post-Secondary Education and the Future of Education presents a series of recommendations, with number 13 focusing on OER: “Use Open Education Resources and MOOCs to redesign and deliver accessible, competency-based curriculum content.”

Malta does not currently have any policy actions promoting OER or any systemic use of OER, nor does it have any legislation on open access.

As noted earlier in this report, under Maltese copyright law, all copyright of educational resources lies with the authors, including materials produced with public funds by public servants. Thus, under current legislation, the Maltese government does not have the ability to license the majority of the materials produced within the educational system.

### **2. Why OER is Important for Malta**

Malta currently has no OER activity, but MEDE intends to make OER a priority of the current legislature. The ministry aims to make Malta a centre of excellence for digital education and for testing innovative pedagogies and technologies for the future of education. As key enablers of digital education innovation, OER constitute an important pillar of the overall digital education strategy.

The many secondary benefits of OER include:

- increasing the number of educational opportunities available to Maltese students by allowing for enrichment of curricula thanks to OER, and by facilitating students’ ability to consume OER or follow OER-based courses produced outside of Malta;
- improving the government’s return on investment for textbooks;
- contributing to Malta’s soft power by acting as a vehicle for the export of Maltese identity and culture; and

- increasing the sharing of best practices between teachers and academics at all levels of education.

### **3. Institutions Using OER**

#### Ministry for Education and Employment

MEDE is responsible for all aspects of educational policy and lifelong learning in Malta, and as such is commissioning this report and will be the prime driver of any educational reform.

Within the ministry:

- The Directorate for Curriculum, Lifelong Learning and Employability deals with the strategy aspects relevant to this report. The head of the directorate and the Director of Learning and Assessment Programmes were consulted on the policy recommendations in this report.
- The EdTech Committee deals with all aspects of digitisation policy. Members of the committee were also consulted on the recommendations in this report.
- The Information Management Unit is responsible for maintenance of ICT in the ministry and in schools across the country and would be responsible for implementing any infrastructure proposals in this report.

#### *Government-Owned Compulsory Education Institutions*

All government schools fall directly under the purview of the ministry. As such, all strategic aspects of school management are decided centrally at the ministry.

#### *Other Government Entities Involved in Open Strategies*

The Malta Council for Science and Technology is responsible for Malta's Open Science and Open Access for Research Policy, while the Office for the Prime Minister coordinates Malta's overall Open Government and Open Data strategies.

#### *Libraries Malta*

The mission of Malta Libraries is to ensure the collection and conservation of Malta's documentary heritage for present and future generations, to maintain and develop the libraries regulated under the Malta Libraries Act, and to encourage reading for study, research, self-development and lifelong-learning information and leisure purposes. Industrial Property Registrations Directorate within the Department of Commerce This office handles all intellectual property policy (including in the area of copyright) on the national, regional (EU) and international levels. For this reason, the office carries out the review and analysis of all documentation relating to intellectual property topics being discussed in any forum.

#### Educational Institutions

##### *University of Malta, MCAST and ITS*

These three organisations are independent of but fully funded by government. As such, policies on open access to publicly funded materials would apply directly to these

institutions. Of the three, only the University of Malta has an open access policy.<sup>24</sup> The policy effectively sets up an open archive for research publications from the university and encourages all staff and researchers to contribute to the archive. No mention is made of educational resources or of materials produced by students, such as theses.

#### *Church Schools*

Church schools in the compulsory education sector are managed by the curia but are funded by the government. Hence, policies on open access to publicly funded materials would apply directly to these institutions.

#### *Private Educational Institutions*

While there are over 100 private educational institutions in Malta, they serve only a small fraction (< 10%) of Malta's students.

### Commonwealth Centre for Connected Learning

In February 2017, the ministry set up the Commonwealth Centre for Connected Learning. This was established as an arms-length foundation in collaboration with the Commonwealth of Learning, in Canada, providing Malta with access to an international network of OER experts and practitioners. The centre will be working in conjunction with key stakeholders in the ministry and other Maltese institutions in order to facilitate policy initiatives and pilot projects.

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<sup>24</sup> Available from

<https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar/bitstream/handle/123456789/20022/OA%20Policy%20for%20the%20UM.pdf;sequence=6&isAllowed=y>

## V. National Consultation: Summary of Major Recommendations

### Legal Limitations to Government Reach over Copyright Policy

Under Maltese copyright law, all copyright of educational resources lies with the authors, including materials produced by public servants. This is incompatible with the core principle of an OER policy, whereby materials produced with public funds should be placed within the public domain.

Although most OER policies include a specific clause to the effect that the copyright of all materials produced with public funds shall lie with the government, this approach is not recommended for Malta because removing authors' rights, even in the public interest, is seen as politically unfeasible.

While the OER policy sets up an open mandate for all educational resources whose copyright is owned by the government, the government effectively does not currently own the rights to any educational resources.

Stakeholders therefore recommend extensive consultation to create a separate copyright policy that clarifies ownership rights over teaching, learning and research materials produced with public funds.

To enable the government to meet its commitments under the UNESCO OER Declaration and the Ljubljana Action Plan, as well as those agreed at the May 2016 Competitiveness Council, such consultation should explore three possibilities:

- Change the Malta Copyright Act so that the government owns the copyright of material produced with public funds.
- Establish a new Open Access Order that legislates open access to materials produced with public funds while leaving copyright with the current owners.
- Change labour contracts with public servants so that the copyright of all materials they produce as part of their work resides with the employer, and include this as a standard clause in subcontracting agreements.

### A Model for Resource Curation

The consultation established the Primary Mathematics Support Team as an example of good practice to be replicated. The team consists of mathematics teachers coordinated by a specific desk within MEDE whose aim is to improve maths competence in schools by creating resources for teachers and parents. The team works collaboratively to create a range of educational materials, which are published for free on its website<sup>25</sup>, and also recommends resources through the same website as necessary. The team has received strong positive feedback from within the education department as well as from parents. We thus see this as a replicable model for other subjects across all levels of education.

It has been suggested that similar teams could be made responsible for selecting and creating OER across different subject areas within the scope of the OER policy.

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<sup>25</sup> <http://primarymaths.skola.edu.mt>

### Focus on Lifelong Learning

Several stakeholders indicated that any policy on OER should take into account the full spectrum of educational activities offered by the state, ranging from pre-primary through to adult education. In particular, it was felt that OER has significant potential to strengthen:

- the provision of job-retraining services by state organisations such as Jobs Plus; and
- the resources available to support non-formal education.

To this end, it was suggested that NGOs as well as the employment authorities should have a stake in the overall process.

### Changes of Mentality

Several stakeholders pointed out that a number of changes in compulsory schooling have sought to give teachers more direct control over curricular materials. At the policy level, this has been supported through a shift from the concept of a national minimum curriculum to more flexible “Learning Outcomes Programmes.” However, many educators still prefer to teach from a preset textbook and teaching guide rather than to select their own resources.

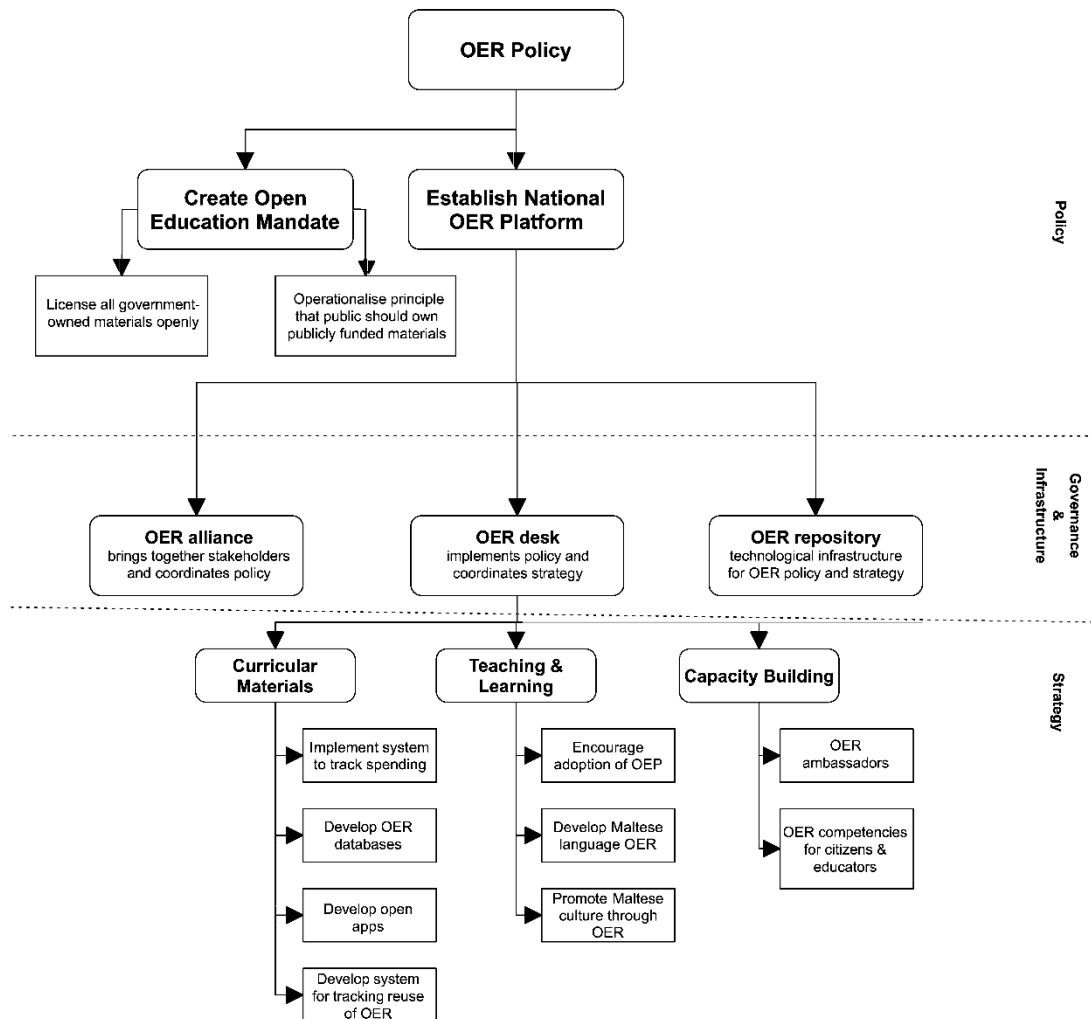
Thus, any adoption of open educational practices would necessitate significant support in terms of capacity building, training and incentives to mainstream these new flexible approaches.

# Annexure 1: Draft OER Policy for Education in Malta

## 1. Scope of Policy

1.1 This document consists of a policy and strategy on open educational resources and practices in Malta, modelled upon a template provided by the Commonwealth of Learning. It is designed to support Strategy 5: Embrace Emergence of Open Educational Resources as an Opportunity for Connected Learning, within the Malta National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2020.

The document broadly deals with the following issues:



1.2 Open educational resources (OER) are teaching, learning and research materials in any medium, digital or otherwise, that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open licence that permits no-cost access, use, adaptation and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions. Open licensing is built within the existing framework of intellectual property rights as defined by relevant international conventions and respects the authorship of the work.

1.3 Open educational practices (OEP) describe the use of OER to raise the quality of education and training and innovate with educational practices on institutional, professional and individual levels.

- 1.4 This policy serves to describe the approach of the Malta Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE) towards the creation, use and reuse of OER and the promotion of OEP within the Maltese educational system as a whole.
- 1.5 This policy applies to all material whose production is financed by public funds allocated by the ministry.
- 1.6 This policy applies directly to all educational institutions that fall directly under the purview of the ministry, and all staff of said institutions.
- 1.7 Autonomous educational institutions (AEIs) financed by the ministry are those educational institutions established by virtue of Chapter 327 of the Laws of Malta but not falling under the direction of the minister. These are requested to launch their own strategies in line with the principles and actions outlined in this policy.

## **2. Mission, Vision and Goals**

- 2.1 The overall aims of Malta's Open Education Resources (OER) Policy are to:
  - 2.1.1 ensure public access to all materials paid for with public funds;
  - 2.1.2 increase the quality and quantity of educational opportunities available to Maltese students;
  - 2.1.3 mainstream OEP within Maltese education; and
  - 2.1.4 promote and disseminate Maltese history, culture and values.
- 2.2 The goals of Malta's OER Policy are to:
  - 2.2.1 increase the number of educational opportunities available to Maltese students by:
    - 2.2.1.1 allowing for enrichment of curricula thanks to OER; and
    - 2.2.1.2 facilitating students to consume OER or follow OER-based courses produced outside of Malta;
  - 2.2.2 contribute to Malta's soft power by acting as a vehicle for the export of Maltese identity and culture;
  - 2.2.3 increase the sharing of best practices between teachers and academics at all levels of education;
  - 2.2.4 improve the government's long-term return on investment for content in terms of educational materials; and
  - 2.2.5 improve the efficiency of investment in educational materials across the economy.

## **3. Intellectual Property Rights and Licensing**

- 3.1 All teaching, learning and research materials in any medium, digital or otherwise, whose copyright lies with MEDE or any AEI shall by default be considered licensed under the latest version of the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike licence on publication.
- 3.2 Any teaching, learning and research materials in any medium, digital or otherwise, whose copyright lies with MEDE and does not contain a licensing notice shall by default be considered licensed under the latest version of the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike licence.
- 3.3 MEDE shall ensure that it owns (either directly or via AEIs) the copyright to all teaching, learning and research materials developed with public funds.
- 3.4 MEDE or any AEI reserves the right to apply a different licence or copyright arrangement to any teaching, learning and research material. Such application shall occur by means of the copyright holder applying a different copyright notice to the material. Different licences may be used when the application of a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike would:
  - 3.4.1 be contrary to legislation, court order or specific government policy;
  - 3.4.2 constitute a breach of contract or lead to disclosure of a trade secret;
  - 3.4.3 prevent the patenting of an invention; or
  - 3.4.4 adversely affect the copyright holder's operations and/or economic viability.



- 3.5 The provisions of this policy shall also apply retroactively to all teaching, learning and research materials whose copyright is owned by MEDE or AElS, providing that it does not contradict existing licences.
- 3.6 On publication, MEDE and AElS shall endeavour to make all resources available online in editable digital formats.
- 3.7 MEDE shall establish, in conjunction with stakeholders, a copyright policy that clarifies ownership rights over teaching, learning and research materials produced with public funds.

#### **4. Curriculum Design and Material Development**

- 4.1 MEDE, in collaboration with the National Statistics Office (NSO), shall implement a statistical system of tracking total national spending on curricular materials. This should be able to track spending on curricular materials by public and private schools, AElS and private individuals.
- 4.2 MEDE, in conjunction with AElS as necessary, shall create pilot programmes at primary, secondary and tertiary levels for the development of OER databases for specific subjects at specific levels. Such OER databases shall:
  - 4.2.1 have the explicit aim of replacing textbooks and other closed-source educational materials;
  - 4.2.2 be hosted online, with content tagged to specific learning outcomes on the curriculum;
  - 4.2.3 be populated by teams of teachers, modelled on the Maths Resource Team; and
  - 4.2.4 be populated with content that includes:
    - 4.2.4.1 OER repurposed from other sources;
    - 4.2.4.2 OER from other sources modified (or translated) to match the local context; and
    - 4.2.4.3 original material produced by teachers and released as OER.
- 4.3 MEDE shall launch a scheme to encourage local development of open apps linked to the One Tablet per Child initiative. With respect to this initiative, MEDE shall also endeavour to use only licensed content.
- 4.4 MEDE shall develop a scheme for tracking and rewarding the use and reuse of OER within education, as well as for tracking the ratings/rankings of various resources. Such a system may include a system of alt-metrics, which would be taken into consideration for the professional progression of teachers.

#### **5. Teaching and Learning**

- 5.1 MEDE shall encourage the adoption of OEP by educators throughout Malta. This shall include incentives and training for educators to:
  - 5.1.1 build on OER and move on to the development of concepts of how OER can be used, reused, shared and adapted;
  - 5.1.2 seek ways to use OER for transforming learning;
  - 5.1.3 focus on learning as a construction of knowledge assets that they share with others and about which they receive feedback and reviews; and
  - 5.1.4 follow the notion of improving quality through external validation because of the importance of sharing resources.
- 5.2 MEDE shall specifically encourage the creation of Maltese-language OER and the translation of existing OER into Maltese.
- 5.3 MEDE, in collaboration with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion, shall promote the use of OER to teach students outside Malta about Maltese language, culture and history. This shall be done by creating a specific OER portal for this purpose.

#### **6. Capacity Building**

- 6.1 MEDE shall develop the capacity of educators and institutions to deal with OER and OEP by providing support through a network of OER ambassadors, supported by a central unit.

- 6.2 MEDE shall support the adoption of OEP in the context of the EU Digital Competence Framework for Citizens and the European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators (DigCompEdu), by integrating the following competences into national digital teaching strategies:
  - 6.2.1 Concepts of digital ownership and licencing
  - 6.2.2 Concepts of sharing and reuse
  - 6.2.3 Creating OER
  - 6.2.4 Evaluating, using and reusing OER
  - 6.2.5 MEDE incentivising AELs in their roll-out of OER policies and strategies

## **7. Infrastructure and Connectivity**

- 7.1 MEDE will operate a national OER platform.
- 7.2 The national OER platform will consist of an OER repository, a set of content collections curated using the repository, and a network of stakeholders who together manage the repository.
- 7.3 The OER platform will:
  - 7.3.1 allow for the publication and sharing of locally produced OER;
  - 7.3.2 serve as a knowledge and resource exchange for teachers and students; and
  - 7.3.3 act as a showcase for the best national OER.
- 7.4 The OER repository will:
  - 7.4.1 allow for storing data as well as for harvesting data from other institutional repositories;
  - 7.4.2 allow for tagging of OER to specific skills at specific levels of the Malta Qualifications Framework;
  - 7.4.3 allow for tracking of use and reuse;
  - 7.4.4 enforce a specific metadata standard that is in line with global norms;
  - 7.4.5 utilise open APIs to allow it to be harvested by other tools;
  - 7.4.6 include tools for building communities around learning objects.
- 7.5 The national OER platform shall link institutional and national repositories into a single collection operated by MEDE.
- 7.6 The definition of Melitensia shall be extended to cover all locally produced teaching, learning and research materials. Deposit in the national OER repository shall be considered deposit for the purposes of Melitensia.
- 7.7 Guidelines for the development of digital content and repositories with World Wide Web Consortium compliance shall be established.

## **8. Quality Assurance (QA)**

- 8.1 All OER in the national repository shall indicate the specific QA procedures that have been applied to them.
- 8.2 The national OER platform shall encourage the use of peer review for QA of resources and provide the technical tools to do so.
- 8.3 Malta shall establish, through the National Commission for Further and Higher Education, a methodology for assessing the quality of course-style OER such as MOOCs and for attributing ECTS ratings to said courses. Such ratings will be valid for the purposes of transfer credit within all Maltese further and higher educational institutions.
- 8.4 Malta shall establish a list of courses that have received such a review, as well as create an application procedure to go through such a review.

## **9. Institutional Arrangements**

- 9.1 Implementation of all aspects of this policy, including the administration of pilots and the wider mainstreaming of policy, shall be coordinated by an OER desk set up within MEDE. The desk will operationally report to the minister and be guided by the OER Alliance.
- 9.2 The OER desk shall include an OER support unit, which will be responsible for supporting teachers. The support unit will include a central node, supported by OER “ambassadors” in all educational institutions.
- 9.3 All AEIs shall create OER policies and strategies that integrate with this policy and deposit them with MEDE.
- 9.4 Government shall create a high-level open government group tasked with integrating Malta’s OER, open science and open data policies into a single national open government policy.

## **10. Implementation Strategy**

- 10.1 This policy shall in the future be updated and maintained by an OER Alliance, located within the platform and made up of representatives of all AEIs, MEDE as well as relevant stakeholders such as teachers and students.
- 10.2 This policy shall be updated within three years and every five years thereafter.
- 10.3 MEDE shall furnish the OER desk, OER platform and OER Alliance with appropriate funds to conduct their activities.
- 10.4 The OER desk shall create an annual plan of activities, to be approved by the OER Alliance as well as the minister, and publish an annual report of those activities.

## **Appendix 2: Strategic Measures of Strategy 5 of the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning**

5.1 Embrace the potential of ICT, digital content and the availability of OER as a tangible opportunity to explore new, flexible and alternative learning methods and routes to adult learning and secure participation from all social strata. The fact that OER uptake has now spread to the secondary level of education in other countries can greatly help address gaps in education delivery and provide flexible and adaptable means of continuing education beyond the primary and secondary years. It offers significant potential to those who have left mainstream education and wish to have access as adult or lifelong learners.

5.2 Use the European Commission's call for EU-level cooperation on OER as the platform from which to push reforms towards the adoption of open learning environments within adult education. This will involve the development of a sound policy framework for the introduction of innovative learning and teaching practices through technologies in schools, universities, VET and adult learning institutions. There is a significant opportunity to rethink the role of digital technologies within adult learning institutions.

5.3 Embrace the potential of connected learning to explore and develop new models of adult education rooted in the principles of human social activity. These models are based on the key assumption that knowledge is a three-fold dynamic process of cognition, communication and cooperation.

5.4 Encourage the use of OER in vocational education and in other informal learning settings, where student-centred learning combined with ICT also carries huge potential.

5.5 Address OER policy advocacy from the outset, including issues relating to online course accreditation, licensing, quality assurance, intellectual property rights, data protection and privacy. OER require open licensing and extended copyrights for wider use without compromising the moral and intellectual rights of the creators. A lack of understanding of copyright and open licensing issues at senior levels in academic institutions and public organisations may be a roadblock for OER development. Our intention is to develop a framework for connected learning in Malta that will eventually be considered an example of best practices for regulating the pan-European digital media schools of the future. This process is likely to include: the adaptation of validation and recognition instruments used in formal education to recognise the emergence of a much more diversified educational offer brought about by new education providers; new forms of learning made possible by technology; and new tools to support the accreditation of technology-supported learning taking place outside the immediate remit of formal education institutions.

5.6 Leverage the mass take-up of OER in other countries to mobilise support from stakeholders, including teachers, learners, parents and social partners, and drive much-needed change within the adult education sector.

5.7 Leverage current research on and best practices in OER to improve delivery methods for adult education and challenge long-standing positions on pedagogy, context and social interactions. Connected learning reinforces a number of principles that may appear to challenge traditional approaches to lifelong learning and adult education, in particular:

5.7.1 A stronger use of learning experiences can be created by combining face-to-face tuition with online learning through blended learning.

5.7.2 OER can be used to stimulate and increase students' motivation to learn, as well as the overall effectiveness of learning.

5.7.3 Students are expected to build knowledge from open and free sources other than their teachers and institutions, and with different methods. Claims for the benefits of connected learning include:

- a) It is equitable, social and participatory.
- b) It draws on the power of current technology to connect different areas of a learner's life and create new, robust learning experiences.
- c) It involves hands-on production, open networks and shared purpose as part of the learning process.
- d) It encourages active experimentation/design/production/creation.
- e) It leverages the interests of each student to keep them engaged.
- f) It involves extensive, ongoing participation by members of communities, which in turn helps encourage participation, feedback and engagement.
- g) Learning is linked to school, home and the community, rather than being an isolated activity in a classroom.
- h) Social media and networking are used to link learners' common goals and to share information.

Creative Commons licences provide the means through which OER may be developed and shared along a spectrum of openness. Traditional copyright ensures that materials may not be used in any way without permission.

5.7.4 "Learning" may take place anywhere and anytime if learners have access to technology and an Internet connection, and with minimal formal institutional support. Students are actively encouraged to develop learning communities beyond their classrooms; everyone may engage in learning/study groups.

5.7.5 Personalisation and customisation of education become easier because of OER's underlying characteristics. OER can immediately be used within a blended learning context via a mix of face-to-face learning experiences and online lectures and coursework.

5.7.6 Teachers can also use OER to create communities of practice, collaborate and exchange teaching materials and best practices.

5.7.7 Initial teacher education and continuing professional development will need to place a strong emphasis on digital-supported teaching methods (digital pedagogies).

5.8 Support learning institutions, teachers and learners in acquiring and improving the digital literacy skills needed to use OER for their present and future connected learning. The development of a critical spirit among teachers, all educational institutions and adult learners in particular can improve citizens' capacity to adapt and promote innovation in education.

5.9 Incorporate OER as standard digital technologies within education institutions.

5.10 Develop incentives for teachers, learners and organisations who wish to use programmes delivered through the use of OER and ideally in a blended learning format. These incentives could include: funding and research grants; scholarships for promising educators; and the nurturing of international specialist networks for educators interested in OER and connected learning, leveraging formal EU networks where possible.

5.11 Explore new, flexible and alternative learning methods for structured as well as personalised and informal learning facilitated by OER. The provision of multiple pathways should encourage people from all backgrounds to follow and build on their interests to become “creative learners.” School subjects tend to be taught in a uniform, structured manner that cannot appeal to all students; technology can be used to alert educators to students’ individual needs and shortcomings, with computer algorithms sifting through masses of information to continually assess students and tailor lessons to their needs.

5.12 Explore mobile learning for adult learning across multiple contexts through social and content interactions. The diffusion and growing widespread availability of OER, together with the extended reach of smartphones, tablets and netbooks, have opened up opportunities for ubiquitous learning.

5.13 Promote awareness of the various interpretations of “open licensing” and its implications for Maltese society. OER need to be positioned as teaching, learning and research resources that reside in the public domain or have been released under an intellectual property licence that permits their free use or repurposing by others. The widespread use of social technologies by Maltese citizens can also be used strategically to raise awareness of the benefits of online and blended learning as new approaches to adult learning, and the possibility of OER actually increasing students’ motivation to learn.

5.14 Use OER to facilitate the connection and networking of learning communities in Malta and Gozo, and more importantly within the global learning community.

5.15 Embrace opportunities for economies of scale through the use of OER at various tiers of adult learning. This is especially relevant and beneficial for emerging economies such as Malta’s, with challenges including:

- a) shortages of qualified teachers;
- b) a lack of high-quality adult learning materials; and
- c) the need to expand access to both formal and informal education to reduce early school-leaving.

5.16 Work with public and private ICT organisations to develop an infrastructure that can bridge the remaining digital divide and make digital education available to all citizens in Malta and Gozo. The required infrastructure for digital education is not available everywhere, and access to open resources is not always free. An investment in infrastructure can range from subsidised hardware for learners to ubiquitous Wi-Fi in Malta and Gozo.

5.17 Ensure that whenever possible, educational materials produced with public funding are also made available to all citizens as OER.

## **Appendix 3: National Consultation**

### **Participant List**

Goldfrey Baldaccino	National Commission for Further and Higher Education
Gaetano Bugeja	Director, Learning and Assessment Programme
Martin Bugeja	Digital Media and Education Committee
Stephen Cachia	Director, General Lifelong Learning
Melanie Casha	National Numeracy Strategy Education Officer – Maths
Joe Cauchi	EdTech and Post-Secondary Committee
Angela Coppini	Representative of Church Schools
Alex Grech	Director, Commonwealth Centre for Connected Learning
Stefan Sant	Malta Qualifications Recognition and Information Centre
Louis Scerri	Education Assessment Unit

### **People Consulted During Preparation of the Report**

Additionally, the following persons have provided direct input on this report:

Evarist Bartolo	Minister for Education and Employment
Gaetano Bugeja	Director, Learning and Assessment Programme
Francis Fabri	Permanent Secretary, Ministry for Education and Employment
Alex Grech	Director, Commonwealth Centre for Connected Learning
Charmaine Cristiano Grech	Legal Advisor, Ministry for Education and Employment

### **National Consultation Agenda**

Date: Friday, 23 April 2018

Time: 12:00pm – 3:00pm

Venue: Education Assessment Unit, Hamrun (behind the NCC)

#### **Programme**

12:00 – 12:15	Introduction and Tour de Table (Gaetano Bugeja)
12:15 – 12:30	What is OER and Why an OER Strategy (Alexander Grech)
12:30 – 1:00	Opportunities and Threats from an OER Strategy – Discussion
1:00 – 1:20	Outline of an OER Strategy for Malta (Anthony F. Camilleri)
1:20 – 2:00	Open Discussion of the OER Strategy
2:00 – 2:20	Evaluation of Specific Proposals Using a Decision Matrix
2:20 – 2:30	Presentation of Results
2:30 – 2:45	Next Steps



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