WP1: Identify respective institutional and, if possible, national policies towards distance education, Open Science and Open Education in each of the five countries.

1. Tunisia

National level: institutions

VUT

The Virtual University of Tunis (VUT), a public institution, established in January 2002, its main mission is to develop courses and university curricula in line for Tunisian universities. VUT provides its students professionalizing courses tailored to the economic, social, national and international. Its main objective is to help address the growing demand for higher education courses. Her creation, announced since August 2001 and formalized by decree n°2002-112 of 28 January 2002, is part of a policy of modernization of education higher education and its openness to all Tunisians. On February 17, 2003, the courses online teaching programs are launched. The first experiment was aimed at students enrolled in three ISETs, that of Rades, Sousse and Sfax.

Decree No. 2006-1936 of July 10, 2006, setting the UVT's mission, its training and its relationship with other universities, came to testify once again to the operational and progressive integration of this university entity, in the dynamics of the Tunisian higher education system in the digital era. According to the first article of the said decree, the missions of the UVT which are devolved to it are the following :

1) ensure and gradually generalize the training not face-to-face with a view to making it diploma and certifying;

2) integrate a non-face-to-face teaching rate within face-to-face training;

3) unify initiatives related to educational technologies;

4) facilitate the dissemination of the culture of continuing education and lifelong learning in an environment based on science and innovation, by means of ICTE;

5) reinforce equal opportunities in the field of higher education, fight against exclusion and work to ensure that this training reaches the most large number of target audiences outside the circle of students regular

8) respond to the challenges of the growing number of students in higher education by gradually relieving priority courses in face-to-face universities to cover 20% of content by 2009.

Decree 2006-1936 specifies two types of UVT missions.

- The first assignment of a pedagogical nature consists in "providing non-face-to-face training integrated (initial), provide comprehensive non-face-to-face (continuous) training, produce a digital and innovative educational content and train teachers, trainers, technicians and managers.
- As for the technological mission, it consists of "host digital educational content to meet the needs of non-face-to-face teaching, directing and managing non-face-to-face training platforms face-to-face, supervise and monitor the work of distance learning centers, videoconferencing centers and production laboratories".

Institut de formation continue

The Higher Institute of Education and Continuing Education (I.S.E.F.C) has been a public scientific and technological establishment since 2022 (Presidential Decree No. 2022-206 of March 4, 2022). The Higher Institute of Education and Continuing Education (I.S.E.F.C) provides lifelong training in several disciplines in addition to specialization in educational sciences and disciplinary didactics. It offers a diversified training package covering hybrid continuing education (face to face and online), initial training, master's and doctoral training. A quality assurance system in accordance with the requirements of the ISO 21001 standard has been put in place

Virtual Department

In the decree 2006-1936, it was decided to create virtual teaching departments within universities. These departments will be responsible for coordination between the Virtual University, and the Universty hosting the virtual department regarding the Online education activities

Tunisian agency for accreditation and Quality insurance

 The creation of Tunisian agency for accreditation and Quality insurance has been realized according to the following Decrees and Laws

- Decree No. 2012-1719 of 14 September 2012 establishing the creation of the national authority for evaluation, quality assurance and accreditation and the modalities of its operations.
- Law No. 2008-19 of 25 February 2008 on higher education.

The mission of this agency is to support public and private academic institutions to develop the culture of quality in the Tunisian academic context and to ensure international confidence in the Tunisian higher education system.

A set of objectives have been identified :

- Establishing the authority of IEAQA in quality assurance in Tunisia and initiate an external presence.
- To sensitize and support decision-makers, interest groups and interested parties to the concept of evaluation and accreditation in the Tunisian universities.
- Invest in the preparation and training of evaluators and experts.
- Establish partnerships and networking with Arab, African, and international counterparts to facilitate mutual exchange and recognition.
- Encourage studies, research, and innovations on the different components of quality assurance in higher education.

https://www.ieaqa.com/index.php/en/home-en/presentation/identite

National level: policies

Distance education

The MERST strategies of 2008: "the MESRST oversees the development of non-face-to-face training and the training system virtual, as part of lifelong learning. The UVT assumes this function, and this within the framework of its functions and relations with other universities.

In 2015 the decision-makers propose a restructuring and a review of the role of the UVT as part of the strategy of the Ministry of Higher Education for the period 2015 - 2025: "review the role of the Virtual University and the Departments of Virtual Education as part of a national digital strategy".

Open science & Open Access & Open Research Data

A conference on "Open Science – The Way Forward" was held in Tunis, sharing best practices and experiences, spotlighting trends and exchanging information with focus on Open science and Open Access, in addition to topics related to: Artificial Intelligence, , Clouds, Infrastructures and Science Cooperation. Right now there is no national policy related to open sciences

https://asrenorg.net/?q=content/open-science-way-forward

Digital skills

In Tunisia, and since 2007, a Certificate in computer science and internet C2i has been introduced . The Certificate of Computing and Internet (C2i) is indeed a national certification on the digital skills needed by students for their training and professional integration,

Target audience : Students or graduates of higher education; Candidates holding the baccalaureate. The certificate has been deployed based of the two following orders issued by Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

- Order of the Minister of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Technology of 13 July 2007 laying down the conditions for obtaining a computer and Internet Certificate issued by the Virtual University of Tunis.
- Order of the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research of 22 April 2013 amending the Decree of the Minister of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Technology of 13 July 2007.

Open education

No national policy exists yet.

2. University of Sousse

Institutional level – University of Sousse: Units task forces, working groups

Unit for pedagogical Innovation and digitalisation

The University of Sousse created in 2019 and in connection withits label USo: For a socially responsible University "Quality & Partnership to Innovate and Serve Society" a pedagogical innovation and digitalisation, making it possible to trigger a reflection with different actors (teachers, students, administrative staff, partners around the world socio-economic, etc. on teaching and learning methods. The General objectives of the unit are :

- Objective 1: Contribute to the development of educational innovation and the generalization of the use of digital technology in training and research within the University of Sousse.
- Objective 2: Set up a support framework for innovation pedagogical through the creation of a support incubation cell at the Digital and pedagogical innovation within the University of Sousse. This pedagogical innovation unit will be responsible for
    - Support and accompany teacher-researchers to deploy their initiatives pedagogical, and particularly those based on digital technology: online courses, serious games, educational video clips.

- Ensure a watch on educational innovations and collect good practices related to pedagogical innovation.
- Promote educational innovation within the university and its institutes and faculties.
- Participate in the university's strategic reflection on everything that may constitute a lever for a sustainable pedagogical transformation.
- Objective 3: Promote the development and adoption of innovative open pedagogies and digital resources at the University of Sousse
- Objective 4: Ensure the development of the digital skills of students in such a way as to strengthen their autonomy in learning and facilitate their employability, through the implementation of hybrid education based on digital resources.

Learning Lab

Digital and innovation competencies are nowadays highly required for students and faculty members in higher education institutions. We therefore need environments that incubate innovative learning scenarios to develop these competencies. We conducted a design-based research with the dual objective to develop learning labs in four universities and to document the design and implementation process and the addressed challenges. A learning lab is defined as a physical, digital and human space for observation, experimentation and evaluation, to rethink and enrich learning and teaching attitudes and practices at the university. A learning lab is an incubator of pedagogical innovation and digital learning structured on three dimensions: spaces, activities and communities. A network of four learning labs in Lebanon, Egypt, Tunisia and Switzerland has been established.

https://letslearninglab.org/

https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10639-021-10783-x

Chair UNESCO on Open Educational Resources

Despite the undeniable expansion of digital educational content around the world, few educational resources under open creative commons licenses exist in Tunisia. Thus the objective of the Unitwin / UNESCO Chair on the "OER" is to inform and raise awareness among the various stakeholders at the level of higher education with regard to the importance of these resources and to encourage them to participate in the creation, use and reuse of "OER". The idea is to create potential mechanisms for detecting the production and use of "OER" in the perspective of formal and informal learning.

This UNESCO/Chair is the first held by the University of Sousse and illustrates its commitment to keeping up with new international standards in the academic field. http://www.services.uc.rnu.tn/oer/

Institutional level – University of Sousse: policies

According the strategic orientation of Sousse university, a set of axis have been established. Below we list the axis related to pedagogical innovation, and digital learning:

- AXIS 1.2: The University of Sousse values educational innovation and excellence in teaching. It supports transformation, pedagogical innovation and the continuous improvement of the quality of teaching.

- AXIS 1.3: Students must be the actors of their training; thus the use of new technologies should be extended as far as possible to widen access, to intensify institutional development and to ensure a universal transmission of knowledge and develop those ci, as well as to facilitate lifelong training (opening up university establishments to adult professionals, etc.)
- AXIS 4.2 - the USo must do everything to promote the use of active methods in training, as well as the strengthening of digital pedagogy. It has been proven that teachers trained in active methods will be better able to promote independent learning, students will thus be more active in their training process.

http://www.uc.rnu.tn/static/actualites/POS20255.pdf

Training of Trainers in Open Education
The CIPEN Unit (Pedagogical Innovation and digital learning unit) in sousse University , has established many ToT related to Open education. A CEC (Cetificat d'études compélemntaires) has been also designed and deployed. This CEC includes modules related to Open education and OER.

https://uso.uvt.tn/course/index.php?categoryid=1135

Project OERwiki@MENA
As a pioneer in pedagogical innovation in the Mena Region, Sousse University is conscious of the importance of adopting OER practices. It launched a joint initiative with Alexandria University, Tunisia through the Centers of Pedagogical Innovation in both universities. The initiative aimed to:

- trigger a movement among the university community at the level of these two universities, as well as in other universities in the MENA region around open educational resources.
- encourage collaboration and sharing through the co-creation of educational material and the freedom to use, personalize, improve, and redistribute it.
- launch a WIKI environment for sharing free educational resources, allowing the university community to create and collaborate on free content, and to share them as free educational resources under a Creative Common license.- produce and share at least 100 OERs in 100 Days.
- promote awareness on OER and creative commons licenses through information seminars.
- promote the production of Arabic OERs.
- position the MENA universities in the global OER communities.
- disseminate the initiative results in international events.

As part of a partnership with Open Education Global Francophone and with the objective of increasing access to education and improving its quality (UNESCO SDG no. 4), theOERWiki@Mena initiative was launched for the development and use of Open Educational Resources (OER) in MENA region. The UNESCO (OER) Recommendation wasunanimously adopted on November 25th 2019 by 193 UNESCO member states and it involves the creation, dissemination and use of OER. As a pioneer in pedagogical innovation in the MENA Region, Sousse University is conscious of the importance of

adopting OER practices and launched a joint initiative with Alexandria University Egypt. Both universities were project partners in the project: "LETS Learning Lab Network". The initiative was launched with complete auto financing by the two universities. The initiative wasled by Prof. Lilia Cheniti from Sousse University, Tunisia and Prof. Ghada El Khayat from the Alexandria University, Egypt. It aimed to trigger a movement among the university community around open educational resources. The initiative was meant to encourage collaboration and sharing through the co-creation of educational material and the freedom to use, personalize, improve, and redistribute it. To this end, a WIKI environment for sharing free educational resources was launched on the 27th of May 2021 in an event organized by OER Global Francophone allowing the university community to create and collaborate on content, and to it under a Creative Common license. A challenge of producing and sharing 100 OERs in 100 Days was announced. The target was surpassed, and 155 resources were produced and launched on the portal in Arabic, English and French. This is considered a pioneering initiative by Alexandria University where a new culture of creating, and sharing is put in place. Having the Arabic language in this initiative (64 resources) is considered another achievement. Finally, using these resources by colleagues and students to guarantee pedagogical continuity is something that we are proud of. Awareness and dissemination took place starting the 24th of January 2021 where the initiative was publicly announced
http://ictlearn.org/oerwiki/en/home_en/