

BeyondScale

Developing the Organisational Capacity of Higher Education Institutions using the HEInnovate platform to facilitate peer learning and a pan-European community of practice

Institutional Country Note

Dublin City University (DCU)

July 2020



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

Beyond Scale - DCU Ireland - Country Note Summer 2020

Section 1:

Overview of Specific HEI in the context of National Higher Education System

DCU (Dublin City University) is one of the seven universities in the Republic of Ireland. These universities, along with eleven institutes of technology and one technological university, are all publicly funded through the HEA (Higher Education Authority). The [HEA](#) leads the strategic development of higher education in Ireland, encompassing teaching, research and engagement. The [IUA](#) (Irish Universities Association) represents the seven universities.

[DCU](#) was founded in 1981 and is now a multi-campus university just north of Dublin city centre. DCU is Ireland's most innovative and fastest growing university delivering more than 200 programmes across five faculties - Humanities and Social Sciences, Science and Health, Engineering and Computing, DCU Business School and DCU Institute of Education. Three leading colleges of education were incorporated into the university in 2016. The university now has over 16,000 students and over 650 staff. A total of 22% of the DCU student population is international, representing over 110 different nationalities. The university has agreements with institutions in over 40 countries across five continents. DCU is consistently ranked among the top young universities globally, appearing in the 2020 QS Top 70 under 50 and the 2019 Times Higher (THE) Top 100 under 50. DCU is ranked in the top 300 universities in the world for both 'arts and humanities' and 'social sciences'.

Competitively won research funding is approximately €38 million per annum (equivalent to ca 16% of total annual budget), and in excess of €250 million for the period 2013 to 2019. DCU has had significant success from national and international funding agencies such as Enterprise Ireland, Science Foundation Ireland, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Wellcome Trust, the European Space Agency, and various European Commission funds such as Horizon 2020, Interreg and Erasmus Plus. For the period 2014 to 2019, it secured 74 Horizon 2020 projects with a total value to DCU of over €32 million. DCU has also secured funding from industry, non-commercial organisations and charities, including the Irish Cancer Society, Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft, Huawei and Facebook, reflecting the global reach and relevance of DCU research.

Entitled '[Talent, Discovery and Transformation](#)', DCU's current Strategic Plan (2017-2022), highlights the university's mission to transform lives and societies through education, research, innovation and engagement. The six key themes central to the plan are: Talent, Discovery, Creativity, Society, Technology and Sustainability. The Core Principles capturing the distinctive essence of DCU are: Transformation, Enterprise, Translation and Engagement. As part of its aims to transform lives and societies through education, research and innovation, DCU's research and enterprise priority areas are: health technologies, and the healthy and ageing society; information technology and the digital society; sustainable economies and societies; democratic and secure societies; and education. Relevant initiatives in the plan include the establishment of the Institute of Creativity and of the Student Innovation and Entrepreneurship Hub in the Student Centre.

DCU has a well-integrated eco-system for innovation and entrepreneurship. It scored very highly in the [2017 HEInnovate Country Report for Ireland](#), in particular in the areas of engagement with industry, teaching of innovation and entrepreneurship at undergraduate and postgraduate level, formal recognition of innovation and engagement through the President's Awards and the DCU Engage Award for student extra-curricular activity. Co-located with DCU, [DCU ALPHA](#) is a commercial innovation campus that promotes the growth of research-intensive businesses that are creating the technologies and services of tomorrow. It hosts 35 indigenous SMEs and multinationals where a total of 350 staff collaborate with the DCU research community. [DCU Ryan Academy](#) is a partnership between Dublin City University and the Ryan Family (Ryanair). It promotes an entrepreneurial mindset and real innovation focus among Irish SME's, corporates, start-ups and researchers through a range of training, leadership and funding initiatives. [DCU INVENT](#) is DCU's innovation and enterprise centre, and the designated technology transfer office of the university. The [DCU National Centre for Family Business](#) is deeply embedded in the Irish family business community, conducting research and hosting conferences, workshops and seminars. DCU is also the Irish partner of the 54-country [GUESS](#) Global University Entrepreneurial Spirit Students' Survey. DCU is the only Irish member of the prestigious European Consortium of Innovative Universities ([ECIU](#)), which has recently embarked on the EC Erasmus+ funded European University project to develop a true European University where learners, researchers and external stakeholders are enabled to create relevant innovative solutions for real life challenge with real societal impact.

DCU prides itself on the wide range of disciplines in which students can study innovation and entrepreneurship. As well as the options in the business school, students can study entrepreneurship in education, in journalism and in engineering, and with the Irish language, to name a few. The DCU [Enrich Framework](#) for doctoral students ensures they are enterprise-ready and enterprising. The Innovation and Entrepreneurship Hub in the 'U' Student Centre offers the [U-Start](#) student accelerator to all students across all faculties. Other relevant teaching and learning related initiatives are the [National Institute for Digital Learning](#), and DCU's membership of [Campus Engage](#), which is based in the IUA, and dedicated to embedding, scaling and promoting civic and community engagement.

Section 2:

Planned Activities of the HEI for the Beyond Scale project which use the HEInnovate framework

2.1 Internal Project: Open Educational Resources in Creativity, Innovation & Entrepreneurship

In the coming academic year, DCU will create a community of like-minded academics and non-academics across the university, interested in embedding entrepreneurship (commercial & social) into their teaching and into the student experience. The aim of this group is to share best practice, collaboratively develop Open Educational Resources (OER) in order to facilitate sharing and reuse across the a wide range of disciplines across the campus.

The primary project for the coming academic year will concentrate on three modules in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and one in the DCU Business School, namely:

BA Business & Irish

Creativity and Entrepreneurship:	Year 1; Semester 1	5 ECTS
----------------------------------	--------------------	--------

BA Social Sciences & Cultural Innovation

Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship:	Year 2, Semester 2	5 ECTS
---	--------------------	--------

Creativity and the Emerging Future:	Year 3, Year-long	5 ECTS
-------------------------------------	-------------------	--------

BSc in Marketing, Innovation & Technology

Innovation and New Product Development	Year 2, Semester 1	5 ECTS
--	--------------------	--------

The [BA Business and Irish](#) is delivered completely through the medium of the Irish language in the academic School [Fiontar agus Scoil na Gaeilge](#), in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. The word Fiontar in the Irish language means enterprise, adventure, undertaking, project, and has the same Latin roots as the word Venture. Fiontar was established in 1993 to provide higher education in business, ICT and entrepreneurship through the medium of the Irish language, a particularly creative and innovative move at the time. The aim was to provide students with key skills to work in industries such as finance and IT, while rooted in their own minority language. The combination of business and minority language attracts students willing to take an unusual path in their education. It leads to the opportunity to encourage students to see the relevance of entrepreneurship and innovation in addressing social issues as well as in developing commercial for-profit enterprises.

The [BA Social Sciences and Cultural Innovation](#) provides students with a unique suite of modules from the fields of sociology, media, politics and innovation. It is delivered primarily by SALIS the School of Applied Languages and Intercultural Studies, along with by academic staff in other schools of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, namely Communications, and Law and Government. The aim of the programme is to equip students for the 21st century workplace and a world defined by rapid technological change. It brings an applied focus to the social sciences, providing students with the opportunity to actively engage with areas such as social entrepreneurship and cultural innovation.

The [BSc in Marketing, Innovation and Technology](#) prepares students with a foundation in marketing and an insight into cutting edge science and technology. Students learn how to bridge the gap between the invention of a technology and its emergence on the market, sometimes called the 'innovation gap'. Students develop an entrepreneurial outlook, an understanding of new product development and an insight into new technologies such as social media, emerging life sciences and biotechnology. The programme is run by the DCU Business school in conjunction with the Faculty of Engineering and Computing, and the Faculty of Science and Health. Graduates of this cross-disciplinary degree typically go on to work as brand account managers, digital marketing executives, technology consultants, or establish their own new enterprises.

All three programmes place a strong emphasis on the development of transferrable skills such as creativity, leadership, ethical and critical thinking, digital literacy, intercultural competence and future thinking.

DCU will develop some Open Educational Resources, which can be retained, re-used, revised, remixed and re-distributed by others with due attribution to the DCU authors. These resources will be of relevance to the particular contexts in which they will initially be used. Materials will be developed in conjunction with the technical expertise of learning technologists such as those working in the [DCU Teaching Enhancement Unit](#) within the [National Institute for Digital Learning](#). The OER materials will be complemented by similar material developed elsewhere worldwide. A portal will point students to various resources they can use, depending on their own particular interests - for example, arts, commerce, equality, health, politics, social issues, sports, technology. The resources will be framed within the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#).

Sample OER topics:

- The creative person
- Fostering creativity
- Future thinking
- Design thinking
- Opportunity recognition
- Opportunity exploitation
- Value proposition
- Entrepreneurial behaviour

The development phase will include consultation with other members of the interdisciplinary DCU Creativity Working Group, currently in the planning phase of the new DCU [Institute of Creativity](#). Key external informants from the social innovation and entrepreneurship sector will be asked to review the OERs before piloting with first cohort of students. See Figure 1 below for further information.

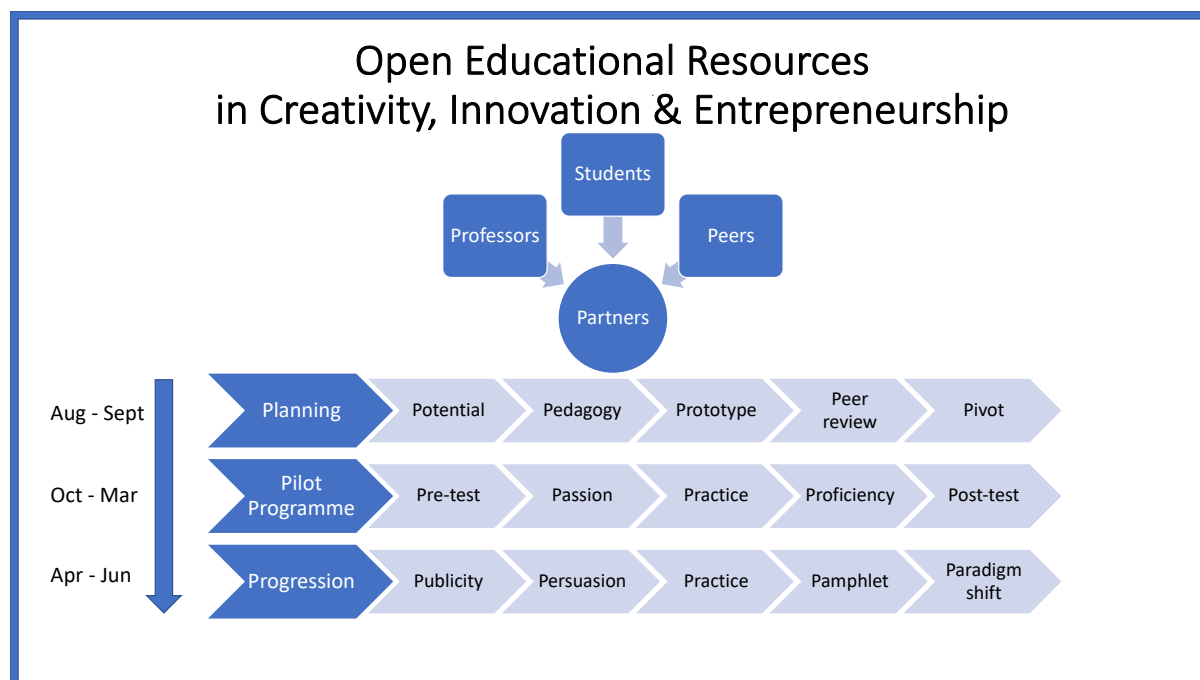


Figure 1: Open Educational Resources in Creativity, Innovation & Entrepreneurship, Aug20 - Jun21

Timeframe:

June 2020 - Aug 2020: Planning, collaboration, collation of materials
 Aug 2020 - Sept 2020: Online structures; course outlines; assignment design
 Sept 2020: Students use HEInnovate Tool
 Sept 2020: Review of OERs by external key informants
 Sept 2020 - Dec 2020: Delivery to both cohorts
 Jan 2021 - Feb 2021: Assignment grading, reflection, review
 Mar 2020: Students use EPIC Tool; Focus Group with Students
 Apr 2021 - Jun 2021: Use of some of materials on second semester programmes
 Writing of case study

2.2 External Project: Innovation and Enterprise in Social Enterprise / NGO / Charity Sector

The NGO / charity / non-profit / civil society / social enterprise sector is recognised as an essential sector in all European societies, providing products and services to tackle a wide range of social issues such as poverty and social exclusion. In Ireland there are nearly 10,000 charities and over 20,000 additional non-profit organisations, employing ca. 190,000 staff and with a combined turnover of over €14.5 billion ([The Wheel, 2020](#)). Within that overall sector it is estimated that there are over 3,000 social enterprises employing more than 25,000 employees in Ireland, compared to around 1,500 social enterprises in Austria (Borzaga et al, 2020, 106). The European Union recognises the valuable role of the sector, most notably via the [DG for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion](#), but also through the DG for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs. The latter has [specific policies and supports for the social economy](#), which includes co-operatives, mutual societies, non-profit associations, foundations and social enterprises. These organisations are usually community-based or established by a number of individuals on behalf of a larger community/group. They also include WISE Work Integrated Social Enterprises providing employment to people typically

far from the labour force (long-term unemployed; disabled; marginalised etc). The DG considers these social enterprises to be the engine for social innovation. Despite the role and value of the overall non-profit sector, there is relatively little debate about the importance of innovation and entrepreneurship in the sector. This is gradually changing. The forthcoming [European Social Economy Summit](#) (postponed from November 2020 to May 2021) specifically addresses innovation, along with collaboration and digitalisation.

Another form of social entrepreneurship is individuals (or small teams) setting up businesses with a social benefit. This type of activity has grown and developed in recent years. A range of publicly and privately funded schemes support these individuals at the early start-up stage. Examples include the [European Union's Social Innovation Competition](#) which has gained traction in recent years. The [Ashoka Changemaker](#) network operates in 20 European countries, including Austria and Ireland. In Ireland, similar programmes are run by [Social Entrepreneurs Ireland](#) and the [Social Innovation Fund](#). These programmes are primarily aimed at fostering the skills of innovation and entrepreneurship in individuals setting up businesses with a social benefit. These latter organisations and those they support are largely funded via foundations and corporates, leading to closer links with the corporate world of CSR. They are a younger form of organisation mostly individually driven and relying on an earned income model (European Commission, 2018, 2020b).

In terms of research, social scientists tend to research the former, more community/collective-based social enterprises while business and management schools tend to be more interested in the individual social entrepreneurs at the start-up phase (European Commission, 2018) Policy makers and indeed the public at large is increasingly interested in social enterprises (European Commission, 2020a).

There is an increasing range of support programmes, incubators and networks available to help those establishing new social enterprises, such as the Ashoka network; the Impact Hub network headquartered in Vienna, Austria; Social Entrepreneurs Ireland and Social Innovation Fund Ireland. There is also a gradual increase in the amount and type of higher education provided across the EU, to prepare graduates for work in the social enterprise sector (European Commission, 2020a) as well as an increasing number of extra-curricular programmes such as Enactus, which operates in 8 European countries.

In Ireland, higher education graduates represent a total of 61% of the workforce in the non-profit sector compared to 38% in the total workforce (Confidential report for The Wheel, 2020). There is increasing pressure on non-profits to diversify their funding sources, and social enterprises, which deliver market-led services and products to generate income are becoming an increasingly relevant part of the NGO landscape. Indeed it is widely agreed that there is a need for more training and education to improve the capacity within the sector in Ireland (Confidential report to The Wheel, 2020; Department of Rural and Community Development, 2019; European Commission, 2020b). Thus, it is particularly important to consider how well the higher education system prepares its graduates for the sector, particularly in terms of the HEInnovate-relevant graduate attributes of innovation and entrepreneurship.

Dublin City University and the University of Innsbruck will work in partnership on this external activity. The partners will engage with the overall social enterprise / NGO / charity sector to assess how well creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship behaviour, skills and attitude are embedded in higher education. See Figure 2 below for further information.

Stage 1: A review will be conducted of the HEInnovate tools and their relevance to the sector; with a view to potential adaptation.

Stage 2: The HEInnovate tool(s) will be used to gauge opinions of two groups of key informants in each of the two partners countries: 1) 10 recent graduates working in the sector and 2) HR and senior managers in the 3 organisations sector. The key research question is to what extent the competencies of creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship were fostered during graduates' higher education. Key informants will be selected by the principal investigators of the project, in conjunction with academic colleagues with particular links with sectoral organisation.

Stage 3: The survey results will be discussed in two seminars, of the recent graduates and of the HR & senior managers.

Stage 4: A final report will be written.

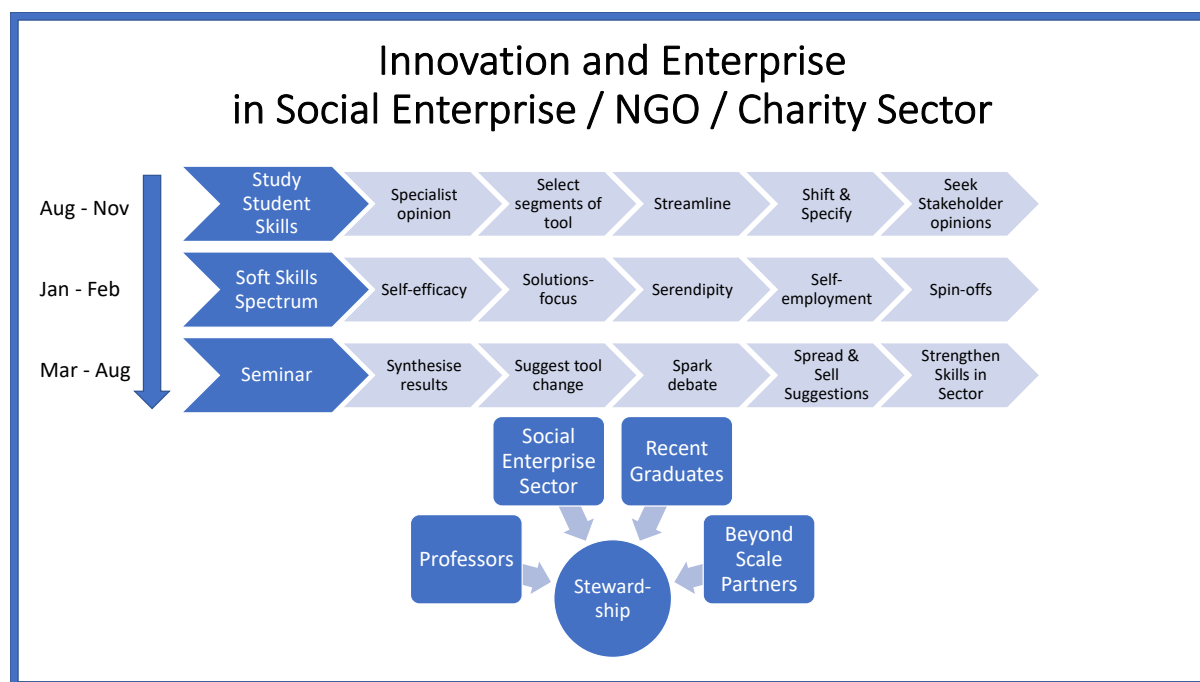


Figure 2: Innovation and Enterprise in the Social Enterprise / NGO / Charity Sector, Aug20 - Aug21

Timeframe:

Aug - Nov 2020:	Assessment of tool and adaptation for this sector Planning, collaboration, collation of survey population lists
Jan - Feb 2021:	Administration of HEInnovate tool survey to external stakeholders to gauge soft skills spectrum
Mar - Aug 2021:	Synthesis of results, debate with stakeholders to spark suggestions to improve tool and to ultimately strengthen innovation and enterprise skills in the sector.

Sample Irish Stakeholder Organisations:

The Wheel: Ireland's national association of community and voluntary organisations, charities and social enterprises. Primarily funded by 1,700+ members.

Carmichael Centre: Provides expert guidance and supports to non-profit organisations in Ireland, for example through office space, back-office supports, and training courses. Shared services facility for over 45 non-profit organisations. Primarily funded by members.

Social Innovation Fund: a national organisation supporting Ireland's best social innovations through cash grants and business supports. Every Euro raised through philanthropy (from corporates, individuals etc) is matched by national Government funding.

[Social Entrepreneurs Ireland](#): Finding people with solutions to social problems and supporting them on every step of their journey. Entirely privately funded by a wide range of prominent entrepreneurs, business leaders and corporates in Ireland, UK and the USA.

Section 3: **Knowledge Exchange - Applying the HEInnovate Framework**

Innovation and entrepreneurship have been central to DCU's mission since its establishment 40 years ago in 1980 as a higher education institution 'designed to be different' (DCU, 2020a). Innovation is second nature in the DCU ecosystem as evidenced by the commendations in the HEInnovate Ireland Country Report (OECD/EU, 2017). Senior management and a wide range of staff involved in innovation and entrepreneurship used the HEInnovate tool during the Country Report field work, and attended HEInnovate events. Staff across all Faculties are familiar with many aspects of innovation and entrepreneurship, whether high-tech nor not, whether commercial or social.

The two Beyond Scale projects outlined in this document will address in particular the following three areas of self-assessment:

- Entrepreneurial teaching and learning
- Preparing and supporting entrepreneurs
- Digital transformation and capability

The EPIC self-assessment tool for students will also be used, in particular in the Internal Open Educational Resources in Creativity, Innovation and Entrepreneurship project. All colleagues in the Institute of Creativity currently being established will be invited to use the HEInnovate tools. That network includes many academics and practitioners not usually involved in the entrepreneurship discipline - for example academics in education, art therapy, music and nursing. Their involvement will expand the use of the HEInnovate tool beyond the traditional disciplines of business, engineering, technology and sciences. They arguably lean more towards social entrepreneurship, a particularly valuable sector in society, that is largely overlooked in the HEInnovate tool. Other colleagues will also be invited to use the HEInnovate tool as part of their current review of their modules and programmes and transfer online due to the Covid-19 restrictions.

External experts in creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship will be invited to review all stages of both the internal and external projects. The HEInnovate framework will be used in those discussions. Feedback from recent graduates will illuminate the success or otherwise of their exposure to the issues and themes covered by the HEInnovate tool. All internal and external users of the tool will be invited to give an honest opinion on what worked well, what did not work so well, and how the tool can be improved. The EPIC tool in particular will be used to assess students' perceptions and assessment of their own knowledge, skills and understanding of creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship before and after the modules listed above. This information will inform the review and retailoring of the modules for subsequent delivery. The close relationship DCU academics traditionally have with students in terms of informal conversations will foster honest conversations.

DCU is currently developing a suite of micro-credentials of 5 to 7.5 ECTS in line with the European Common Micro-credential Framework (European MOOC Consortium, 2019). This is natural progression of DCU's highly successful National Institute for Digital Learning, and the DCU and in particular its partnership in FutureLearn. The Open Educational Resources developed within this Beyond Scale project will provide a basis for a longer-term project to develop micro-credentials in creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship available to all students in a co-curricular context in DCU's Innovation and Entrepreneurship Hub in the 'U' Student Centre.

Section 4: Conclusion

These two DCU Beyond Scale projects are taking place at a crossroads where DCU academics are reviewing and considering more deeply the learning aims and outcomes of their programmes, due to the unexpected shift to online teaching caused by the Covid-19 restrictions. In true entrepreneurial spirit this provides an opportunity to embed more creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship, and a more solutions-focussed, problem-solving attitude into our teaching, to foster in our students the resilience, optimism, self-efficacy, vision and ability to cope with ambiguity, uncertainty and risk so important for the coming decades. The Social Enterprise project is of particular importance in ensuring that graduates who enter that sector have the necessary knowledge, skills and attitude to flourish and to contribute to creating not only a successful economy but a sustainable, equitable society.

References

- Department of Rural and Community Development (2019) *National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland*, Government of Ireland, Dublin. Available at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/e779c3-social-enterprise-policy/>. Accessed May 2020.
- Dublin City University (2017) *Talent, Discovery and Transforming Lives, Strategic Plan 2017 - 2022*, Dublin. Available at: <https://www.dcu.ie/external-affairs/strategic-plan.shtml>. Accessed May 2020.
- Dublin City University (2020a) *New book chronicles the 40 year history of Dublin City University*. Available at: <https://www.dcu.ie/news/news/2020/Jun/New-book-chronicles-40-year-history-of-Dublin-City-University%C2%A0.shtml>. Accessed May 2020.
- European Commission (2018) *Social enterprises and their ecosystems in Europe. Updated country report: Austria*. Author: **Anastasiadis**, Maria, Waltraud Gspurning & Richard Lang. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Available at <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/b6f7a49d-67cd-11e9-9f05-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-133790634>. Accessed May 2020.
- European Commission (2020a) *Social enterprises and their ecosystems in Europe. Comparative synthesis report*. Authors: Carlo **Borzaga**, Giulia Galera, Barbara Franchini, Stefania Chiomento, Rocío Nogales and Chiara Carini. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Available at <https://europa.eu/!Qq64ny>. Accessed May 2020.
- European Commission (2020b) *Social enterprises and their ecosystems in Europe. Updated country report: Ireland*. Author: Mary **O'Shaughnessy**. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Available at <https://europa.eu/!Qq64ny>. Accessed May 2020.
- European MOOC Consortium (2019) *The European MOOC Consortium launches a common micro-credential framework to create portable credentials for lifelong learning*, EMC, Brussels. Available at: https://eadtu.eu/documents/News/Press_release_European_MOOC_Consortium_launches_a_Common_Microcredential_Framework.pdf. Accessed May 2020.
- OECD/EU (2017) *Supporting Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Higher Education in Ireland, OECD Skills Studies*, OECD Publishing, Paris, Available at: https://heinnovate.eu/sites/default/files/oecdeu_2017_heinnovate_report_ireland_0.pdf. Accessed May 2020.