

# OpenER-project at the Open University Netherlands

Bridging informal and formal learning

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# Agenda

- Profile Open University Netherlands
- Motivation for the project
- Characteristics of the project
- Outcomes
- Results so far



# Profile Open University Netherlands (1)

- Founded 1984 by the Dutch Government
- Mission: Offer Open Access Higher Distance Education for Lifelong Learners
- Self-study material and e-learning facilities
- Fully accredited academic programmes
- Cultural Studies, Education, Informatics (broadly viewed computing), Natural Sciences (with a focus on sustainable development), Law, Management (including Economics), and Psychology

## Profile Open University Netherlands (2)

- Over 400 individual courses
- Early 2004 the 250,000th Student subscribed
- > 20,000 average per year
- Head office in Heerlen
- 15 Study centres spread over the country
- ~ 730 Employees



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# Motivation for the project (1)

- 2000 Lisbon Agreement: How can we increase the number of people with higher education?
- Three courses of action:
  - creating a wider range of learning pathways,
  - creating more diversity in higher education and
  - bringing more nontraditional groups (i.e. employed and unemployed people) to higher education by extending opportunities for lifelong learning based, amongst others, on an e-learning approach.

## Motivation for the project (2)

- Lowering existing thresholds (especially financial)
- Easy access and transfer

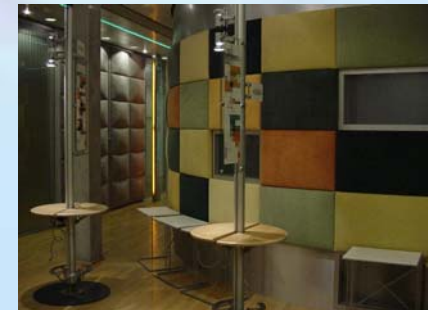


# Main characteristics

- OpenER is flexible, open, time-independent and easy accessible.
  - A.o. a standard PC with internet access and a web browser are sufficient.
- OpenER requires an individual to invest time and effort but does not incur any out-of pocket expenses. The content is self-contained. No materials have to be bought.
- OpenER offer learners the opportunity to seek out, establish and maintain contact with other learners and to form learning communities
- Research and measurements of effectiveness around the project
- All material offered is in the Dutch language

# Outcomes (1)

- 16 courses of 25 study hours each
- a user friendly on-line delivery system
- user friendly on-line facilities for self-testing and assesment.
- a substantial amount of marketing and communication and resulting awareness with the Dutch population about OpenER and the Open University.



## Outcomes (2)

- freely available academic level educational materials
- opportunities for those with limited experience and confidence to become better prepared for formal education
- opportunities for formal testing and certification as a starting point for higher education study
- extra enrollments in Dutch Higher Education
- knowlegde on the effectiveness of open content delivery as a means of stimulating participation in higher education
- knowledge concerning the effectiveness of open content delivery. Particularly in relation with the use of distance education materials
- research and evaluation results on open content delivery and community forming among users.

## Results so far

- IT system installed
- Content of four courses available
- Growing awareness among the OUNL community
  - Barrier: lack of time
  - Barrier: some resistance (idea came from the board)
- Intranet and internetsite online
- Project team complete and running
- Procedure for clearing copyrights

