

European Distance and E-Learning Network

EDEN President's Report

Annual General Meeting 2010

Valencia

Introduction – Demanding year behind and ahead

Whilst the economic and social needs for the development of human capital, learning effectiveness and the exploitation of new technologies have continuously been increased in the recent years, the activity of organisations supporting professional and academic progress, creative networking seemed to face similar challenges and difficulties like any entities in the years of economic crisis.

EDEN has defined its role and approach by continuous development and safeguarding of the structures and values it has been representing with convincing success for quite a while. The strategy has been to build on the synergies of organisation building, international networking, membership services, supplemented by credible professional consolidation, organically supported by policy development. We have done this all this in frames of an open, non-profit organisation,

EDEN on the international scene: Strategic partnerships and networking

Following EDEN's involvement in the past years as ELIG (European Learning Industry Group) Consultative Group member, which relation has been successful in developing visibility in the corporate sector, a Document of Understanding on EDEN-ELIG Partnership, a new framework of collaboration has been signed. The agreement is focusing on communication, professional collaboration and promotion with mutual benefits for both organisations which should also be useful for members directly. Andras Szucs EDEN Secretary General became member of the ELIG Advisory Board.

EDEN was invited to join as Honorary Member in the newly established Middle East e-Learning Association. The initiating host organisation is the Hamdan Bin Mohammed e-University, one of the leading e-learning institutions in the Arab World, the Middle East and African region.

The good relations with IMS Global Learning Consortium have been developing further. A press release on the IMS-EDEN collaboration was issued.

A collaboration agreement between ORION – the Association of Universities in Latin-America and EDEN has been initiated following consultation between the two Secretary Generals.

Several significant events have been attended with the participation of EDEN senior officers: President Alan Tait was invited to the Maastricht ICDE conference, he was also on mission in Romania and China. Martine Vidal, Vice-President visited China, the conference of the Central Radio and Television University on the occasion of their thirtieth anniversary. Morten Paulsen Vice-President attended the EADL conference in Norway. Andras Szucs participated the European e-Strategies meeting in Prague, the International Lifelong Learning Conference in Hungary, the Learnovation Open Forum in Brussels, the EU E-learning Seminar in Cairo and the EFQUEL Innovation Forum in Helsinki.

Continuous correct collaboration characterised the relations with OBHE, EFQUEL, EADL and from outside Europe, with USDLA. The dialogue with ICDE has been unbroken and friendly. EDEN has also remained helpful partner in the Learnovation Stakeholders Round Table. With Elearningeuropa.info, the good partnership has helped to enhance the communication around the EDEN conferences.

2010 is the European Year For Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. Open, distance, e-learning, non-typical learning forms, informal and non-formal learning have traditionally been powerful tools in this field. Increasing number and significance of related EU projects (some of them with EDEN involvement) are indicating the growing awareness about this subject.

Executive committee

Following the unexpected resignation of Mehmet Kesim last June, the EC has co-opted Wim Van Petegem from the University of Leuven. With the resignation of Martine Vidal, EC Member and Vice-President, the Executive Committee had another vacancy. This year the term of Danga Rutkauskiene following six years' membership, is also finishing in the EC. The 2010 AGM will decide about the successors.

We thank and appreciate the contribution of the leaving EC members to the development of EDEN!

With the growing number and increasing complexity of the activities of the Association, the involvement of the Executive Committee needs to be more and more intensive and efficient. The regularity of the EC meetings and their quality was found to be vital. The EC may need more web meetings supplemented by the presential ones. The proposed increase of number of EC members in the EDEN by-laws this year for the AGM was also led by the intention of widening the capacities – on basis of the enlarging membership.

During the **strategy discussions** in the EDEN EC, the questions of approach of the development of EDEN as organisation have been discussed.

The consultations aimed to find out whether there are still missing activities and which may be the groups of institutions and individuals less represented on the palette of membership, further what kind of complementarities, synergy and balance between the existing work, transformation, new activities and new members could be identified.

We found that EDEN is a large network but has still potential to grow. There are areas and potential markets that probably have not been explored largely. We should pay attention to activate better NAP members, to capitalise their ideas, in the meantime to raise further support from Fellows, Senior Fellows.

Management, Finances

The EC has been paying attention to the regular reports of the Secretariat about the income-expenditure balance and liquidity issues. However a credible explanation about the dominantly technical nature of the previous year's negative balance was approved, the actual situation and future scenarios have been closely followed. The state of affairs of finances in the past year therefore was under strict control. It was possible to avoid the previous year's negative balance, and a modest surplus is proving this year again the sustainability and positive perspectives of operation.

The Executive Committee has appreciated the work of the Secretariat for the stable functioning.

Membership, Fellows

We can again acknowledge the stable membership in EDEN in 2009-2010 and that in the not easy economic environment we could attract several new applications. The combined membership and conference registration opportunity has also been found appealing for new members. The established firm procedure in the EC has been followed in approving the new membership applications.

In May 2010, the EDEN membership consisted of 190 institutional members and 1150 individuals (NAP) in the membership – which is a slight decrease against 2009. They are coming from 56 countries, and there are over 400 institutions represented (as institutional or NAP members). Since the 2009 AGM, 15 institutions joined the Association and the number of NAP members increased by 130.

Worth of recalling from the list of the new members in the past months some reputable institutions: Open Universiteit Nederland, Aarhus School of Business, Boston University, Dennis Gabor College (Hungary), the University of Iceland, eCollegeFinder.org, the Near East University (Turkey), and Platon Schools Greece.

The tradition of awarding the EDEN Fellow and Senior Fellow titles has been continued. We believe that the impact of developing professional quality and competences in EDEN

is well demonstrated by the fact that every year a new qualified group of NAP members deserve the award.

The new NAP Member's Area

The establishment of the new area has been considered by the EC as very important issue, one of the main aimed developments in 2010. At the new NAP portal, opened in the last week of May, an own "EDEN portfolio" of members can also be assembled. The portal will also serve as the members' online directory, providing social features and interactive services with effective networking functions, providing a functionality palette, matchmaking, collaboration.

Over 150 invited EDEN NAP members take part in the testing who gave useful feedback and instructions. Their collaboration is much acknowledged.

At the Annual Conference, a pre-conference EDEN session will be organised, where an introduction to the new NAP area will be given.

We hope that the new web area will be a significant addition to the members.

EDEN Conferences in 2010-2011

The Open Classroom Conference in Porto was one of the most successful such events. The involvement of the local community has been very successful and the presence of school teachers was better than ever. The accreditation of the conference as teacher training was also a good achievement. The Portuguese speaking sessions were well embedded in the programme, representing a good experience.

The best contributions have been awarded as "Leading Innovative Practice". The EDEN Porto Message: "Creativity and Innovation in School Education" has been elaborated and issued. Twitterers have intensively commented the event.

The invaluable support of Professor Antonio Teixeira for the conference has to be thanked.

Porto was the 7th Open Classroom conference during the last 15 years. We hope to maintain its momentum, meanwhile intend to refresh and put on a new track, widening the openness concept and opening doors to further communities.

The 2010 Annual Conference in Valencia with the focal theme: Media Inspirations for Learning has again attracted a reassuring number of contributions and delegates. We are confident that its impact will be maintaining EDEN's important role in professional development and academic performance. Interesting to note that a relatively higher percentage of papers came from outside Europe (mainly US and Canada) this year.

The Best Research Paper Award selection arranged in co-operation with the Ulrich Bernath Foundation supports the acknowledgement and enhancement of academic

quality. This is further strengthened this year by the collaboration with IMS, by having the opportunity to submit nominations to their 2011 "Learning Impact Recognition and Awards Program".

Organisation of the Research Workshop in 2010 in Budapest. at the University of Technology and Economics, 25-27 October 2010 is in progress. We intend again to encourage young researchers to attend and to link the workshop to research-training oriented satellite activities.

Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art Design and Technology (IADT) will be the host of the 2011 Conference in Dublin, 19-22 June. There has already been excellent collaboration in the preparation of the event with the local partners, particularly IADT Director Jim Devine.

Ellinogermaniki Agogi from Athen proposed to organise the 2011 Open Classroom Conference in Greece, linked to their significant EU projects.

EDEN in European projects

EDEN has been participating in dozens of European Commission funded initiatives in the past years by offering experience and expertise in the fields of e-learning, open, distance education, lifelong and adult learning. Our contributions include efficient „service packages" in the fields of dissemination, communication, valorisation of project achievements, further in networking, evaluation, quality development, observatory, and knowledge base building. Several important project meetings and satellite events have been organised in frames of the EDEN conferences.

EDEN members have continuously been considering positively this involvement as partner in their new projects. The benchmark of quality has been set high for managing properly the project involvements and to keep the finances and professional performance under proper control.

EDEN was involved recently in five new partnerships: in frames of the latest EU Lifelong Learning Call. The projects entitled SEVAQ+, Te @ch.us, EquNet, FREE and LINKS-UP are all promoted by prestigious partnerships with the objective of further developing the European knowledge society.

During the first months of 2010, again intensive preparation of new EU projects took place. We expect that out of the more than 10 new proposals, at least 2-3 be accepted.

Publications, communication services

The **EDEN Book** "Distance and E-learning in Transition – Learning innovation, technology and social challenges". published in 2009, based on the best EDEN conference papers has been a most successful initiative. The publication was a great achievement in the professional and academic development of the Association. The book was inaugurated at the Annual Conference in Gdansk. From the business side, the

publication was not at all an income raising activity, moreover EDEN contributed financially with a discounted price for its members, helping the access to the book for the NAP community. The relation with the publisher unfortunately has not been smooth, as the complimentary copies for the authors have not always been delivered according to the publication agreement.

The **EDEN web site** has been the regularly refreshed information and dissemination channel. It is planned a comprehensive renewal and fresh design for the site on the occasion of the coming EDEN 20th Anniversary in 2011. In the monthly Newsflashes, we kept informed members about the actual European and international initiatives, policy developments and shared numerous resources with relevance and interest for the professional community. The President's blog has been a channel of sharing information with the community in a personal way.

The EDEN brochure has been reprinted with improved layout and contents

In 2009, in several ways EDEN has used the momentum of the European Year of Creativity and Innovation in its activities.

European Journal of Open, Distance and E-Learning

With a number of 16 published full papers, 2009 was the year of redesign for EURODL. While the final touches such as making articles available in PDF as well are on their way, the Journal is getting ready for the Open Journal System. The new look was launched in May 2009 and in the autumn, additional functionalities were implemented. As a sign of a higher visibility for EURODL, in the first 4 months of 2010 there were 13 new papers published.

Parallel to the regular "New articles available" news service sent directly to subscribers, the same update is constantly visible in the EURODL news section on the front page of the EDEN website as well as inserted in the monthly Newsflash to EDEN members.

According to a recently published study determining a comprehensive listing and relative value ranking of scholarly journals EURODL is ranked as one of the most important non-US online journal in the field of open, distance and e-learning.

Alan Tait

Cambridge, May 2010