

ITEM 3: PRESIDENT'S REPORT**Annual General Meeting 2013****FOR INFORMATION**

The year 2012-13 was rich in challenges, developments and debates in the world of open, distance and e-learning. The advance of technology has been a continuous push, and the economic-social processes also accelerated and complicated the international developments in our environment. In Europe, the effects of global challenges, changing policies, economic crisis and the new EU budget and programme planning period have accompanied our work.

In EDEN, being exposed in a *par excellence* interdisciplinary field of education-learning-ICTs-innovation and information society, we have an exciting and challenging, but all in all successful year is behind us.

International presence and strategic co-operations

We have maintained good relations with European and international partner organisations. New such co-operative agreements have been established with IGIP, the International Society for Engineering Education and modern engineering pedagogy and HETL - the International Higher Education Teaching and Learning Association.

These partnerships not only offer the development of networking capacities, but also the extension of access to services and information available for our members.

The involvement of EDEN representatives in international fellow organisations has continued. Executive members attended as speakers numerous international conferences in Europe and all around the world that helped in the meantime to promote the Association.

EDEN Secretary General was elected as Steering Committee Member and Vice-President in EUCIS-LLL, the European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning which can be a valuable link for our policy portfolio.

The agreement about joining the group of organisers of the 2013 SCOP meeting in Lisbon with ICDE and Universidade Aberta is a sign of successful development of our strategically significant relations and initiatives.

Conferences

The 2012 Annual Conference, in Porto was impact- and contentwise a decent success. The impact of the economic crisis could be felt from the lower number of delegates.

At the Research Workshop in October in Leuven we received most helpful support from the Catholic University as host institution. The good presentations, valuable contributions and in particular, the involvement of the students - which was the main anticipated added value of the conference - resulted in a remarkable event.

With the support of the Ulrich Bernath Foundation, the tradition of awarding the best research paper at the EDEN conferences has continued as an asset for our academic and professional community.

EDEN continued offering its events as a platform for dissemination which is regarded as a strong benefit for the projects. The social web activities accompanying the events became more intensive and better organised.

We decided to suspend – temporarily at least – the organisation of the Autumn conferences as a part of the rationalisation process to balance the use of resources and the revenues created.

The Annual Conference in 2014 will be hosted by the University of Zagreb.

Management of EDEN

The Executive Committee has strengthened its constructive involvement in running the Association. With the new members elected in 2012, the functioning became increasingly mature and effective, working in good synergy with the Secretariat. The organisation of online EC meetings has also increased the efficiency of the work.

At the Secretariat, a ‘workflow restructuring and human resource development programme’ for the staff has been organised to further improve the team work and to reach an appropriate distribution of tasks.

Since its comprehensive renewal and fresh 20th Anniversary design, the EDEN web site has been a regularly updated and resource-rich information and dissemination channel. The monthly Newsflashes deliver up-to-date and relevant information to members, deserving frequent appreciation.

Statistics on our web visibility and activities show that there has been a reasonably high number of contacts on the EDEN web. The Association has also established itself successfully on FaceBook. The data give proof of good responsiveness of our communication actions.

Finances

In the difficult European economic environment, maintaining the financial sustainability became a priority theme in the EDEN Board. The crisis has been a leading challenge, not only for EDEN, but also for our members, partners, ‘consumers’ and sponsors.

The overall income of EDEN did not decrease badly in the difficult environment, but for two consecutive years, the annual balance was negative. The conference income was lower than expected, due to fewer registered delegates, but this was partly compensated by the membership income and developing EU project incomes. In the meantime, the composition of tasks in the new projects has changed, requiring different kinds of input and higher workload.

Whilst we did not foresee liquidity problems, following the recommendation of the Secretary General, the EC found it appropriate to follow finances closer with a systematic approach. Ama Auvinen was assigned to co-operate with the Secretariat in this matter. The attitude was that of increasing income, rather than severe reduction of costs, meanwhile maintaining the level and quality of activities and services.

Some important conceptual issues have also been discussed and introduced, such as how to ensure profitability, liquidity, effectiveness of the resources, to apply systematic approach to the project obligations: on the cash flow side, in workload and resource schedules. It is important in the meantime not to mix the association mindset with the business objectives.

The actions seem to bring results: according to the audited Financial Statements for 2012, we closed the year with a modest positive balance and the foresights for 2013 are favourable again.

A long awaited progress in a technical-financial matter can also be reported: the problem of online card payment to EDEN (conferences, membership fees etc.) has recently been solved and will be available for future operations.

Project work

The EU supported project work has been a significant and contentwise coherent strand of activities. The Executive Committee received regular, detailed reports about the work in the projects. EDEN’s project partners are covering a wide spectrum of different organisations and the thematic variety is also broadening.

An increasing number of invitations to take part in projects was received last year again. Over 25 new project applications were submitted early 2013, mostly based on invitations from members, and 3-6 new projects are expected to start.

Project related events and information resources became regular and appreciated parts of EDEN’s organisational life to support professional development and networking.

EURODL

A separate report about the European Journal of Open Distance and E-Learning will be presented by the Chief Editor.

Professor Alan Tait will leave his post as Chief Editor after almost a decade of invaluable work which has continuously strengthened the journal's reputation, impact and outreach. EDEN and the European academic and professional community owe Alan a debt of gratitude for his momentous EURODL contribution.

A well established technical and organisational background for the Journal from the EDEN Secretariat can be reported. The Best of EDEN printed volumes have proven to be a good initiative, appreciated by members and readers.

From 1 July 2013 until the end of 2014 Ulrich Bernath will lead the Journal as 'acting Chief Editor'.

EDEN membership

The EDEN membership during the last year remained stable, with several new applications. In May 2013, the membership consists of 186 institutions and 1128 individuals (NAP) in the membership. They are coming from 59 countries. There are over 430 institutions represented in the EDEN membership as institutional or NAP members.

Since the 2012 AGM, 23 institutions (including 2 affiliated members) joined the Association.

The EDEN Fellowship has continuously proven to be a good scheme for expressing the recognition of professional excellence by the Association and establish a 'think tank' group of excellent scholars.

For a developing and active membership in NAP, an 'easy online joining process' has been launched: individuals belonging to an EDEN institutional member can apply for NAP membership, without complicated formal steps.

We have invited several project partners to join EDEN, resulting in a few new institutional members. A New Members' Poll has been carried out – with relatively low participation however – and its results incorporated in the activities.

In the web based NAP Members' Area, unfortunately still 10-15 % of the capacities are used only. Some of our projects are working with the collaborative facilities in the area.

Strategy development

The Executive Committee held its bi-annual strategy evaluation and development meeting in October in Leuven.

At previous strategy discussions strengthening the membership and services for members were emphasized. During the past years systematic activities supporting these aims have been implemented.

Late 2012, there was a debate about EDEN's recent modernity: in the age of the online networking and social web, are we contemporary and attractive enough? Which activities and values of the Association should be safeguarded, which ones may be changed or given up?

Amongst EDEN's assets were highlighted its established recognition and the 'brand of activities'. The main pillars for this are: membership, conferences, the network itself, the Fellows scheme, EURODL, project work, Web site and Newsflashes.

There is a traditionally strong and competent EDEN Board (EC) with its safeguarded organisational culture and experience. Efficient management, successfully developed communication channels and operational structures help to increase the impact. Flexible and extended membership services, improved performance and systematic functioning in EU projects are also in the pool of assets.

In EDEN, networking is considered as a key issue. In the professional development and capacity building events, focus should be on engaging membership, to be the part of their experience creation. We address several target groups and should therefore provide services in an articulated way. The priority of activities for the young researchers has been maintained and further developed for the Oslo conference.

Some of our challenges and weaknesses have also been addressed: We have to face growing competition, and the business model of professional networks is challenged. EDEN could do more about fostering synergies between projects, supporting sustainability. Online community building efforts have been to lower extent successful. Dynamic increase in the membership seems to slow down. The affiliate membership concept is still not well enough understood amongst the potential mother institutions (national associations). Learning even more about our members and their needs, engaging membership as a resource for the different activities would be desirable.

Online collaborative social web attempts based on EDEN could be improved. Working with the NAP SC, the EC has dealt with the necessity of a systematic plan and operational model for how to use the social web channels. A strategic and focused communication policy, in particular in the use of social media should be outlined.

Conclusion

When I was elected president at our AGM in Valencia in 2010, I stated that my four favourite e-learning words were: **cooperation, flexibility, transparency and celebration**. Looking back, I'm now thankful that I have experienced a lot of this in my work with the Executive Committee, the Secretariat, the NAP Steering Committee, the EDEN members, the conference delegates and our partners.

Despite of the European economical crisis – EDEN remained economically stable in this difficult financial environment. The Executive Committee has worked together with an efficient, competent, **cooperative** and **flexible** Secretariat. Together, we have witnessed an organizational evolution with a quite stable number of individual and institutional members. We have strengthened EDEN's international presence with a growing number of conference delegates coming from countries outside Europe and with important new strategic co-operations with partner organizations in our field.

EDEN has continued its successful series of conferences, strengthened its academic content, its diversity and impact in the field. We have furthered the important academic work through continuous development of EURODL, promotion of the Best Paper Awards as well as the introduction of the Best of EDEN publications. We have also made a 'Tiger leap' progress with our EU project involvement.

We **celebrated** a remarkable and successful 20th anniversary and moved ahead with better web-services and presence in social media. The technology has also helped us become more **transparent**, allowing us to present and share more information and documentation with our members.

We have built further on the EDEN Fellows scheme which is becoming an increasingly important asset for the organization, both as a think tank and a forum for excellent scholars. Finally, we have sustained our focus and supporting activities for young researchers which has developed into a tradition for the future.

Oslo, June 2013

Morten F. Paulsen