

Introducing EDEN

The European Distance and E-Learning Network (EDEN), as a non-governmental educational association, was formally established in May 1991 following the first pan-European conference on distance education in Budapest in 1990. Its aim is to foster developments in distance education through the provision of a platform for co-operation and collaboration between a wide range of institutions, networks and individuals concerned with distance education in Europe.

According to the Constitution of EDEN, the association is open to members from all the countries of Europe. It is embracing all levels of formal and non-formal education and training, including vocational and non-vocational sectors. It is open to educational institutions, companies, other bodies and associations as well as individuals.

EDEN is the only European organisation where membership is open to anyone - both institutions and individuals - with an interest in open and distance learning. There are two sections of the membership: the Institutions Section and the Network of Academics and Professionals - NAP (individual section). Main types of institutions in the membership of EDEN include educational institutions, national ODL associations and European networks. The members come altogether from 36 countries: 31 in the wider Europe, further from Canada, the USA, Israel, Malaysia, and South-Africa. In terms of size, range and geographical representation of its members, EDEN is the most comprehensive European open and distance learning association of its kind.

In legal terms, EDEN is a non-profit company limited by guarantee, registered under English law with its registered office in Milton Keynes, UK. The Secretariat of the Association is hosted since 1997 by the Budapest University of Technology and Economics, after seven years of functioning at the Open University, UK in Milton Keynes.

Since 1992, EDEN organises conferences on regular basis for the European community of open and distance learning. These events, which by character are annual or thematic ones (open classroom, research, etc.), have developed to the main academic and professional European ODL conferences.

In this year EDEN is continuing its successful series of conferences, following the professional development and policy mainstream in the European distance and e-learning.

That year will earmark a development of great significance in the European Union: the ever-largest extension of the EU, resulting in the accession of ten new Member Countries.

The integrating Europe should benefit from solutions, which support the even more active modernisation of the continent. Enhanced by information and communication technologies and by the further development and deployment of e-learning in all sectors, innovative education is centrally positioned for contributing to this process. The EDEN conference will address the core questions of how distance and e-learning can best play a role in capacity building and support modernisation. The comprehensive perspective of regional development, working as a well-confirmed *modus operandi* of the European Union, will serve as a relevant framework to approach this complex process.

EDEN, established in 1990-91, in another historical period of the European development, has been dealing with the issues of European integration and East-West collaboration with special attention. The 2004 conference will be organised in the spirit of welcoming the new Member States and also for continuing, in a renewed context, the East-West co-operation and pan-European dialogue.

It has been a long way from the first mention of distance education in the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 to the current e-learning programme achievements. The unique moment in 2004 offers also an opportunity to evaluate this far-reaching process, in which technology-supported learning has become mainstream. The EU eLearning Initiative Action Plan has already provided essential momentum for the modernisation process of education. The starting EU eLearning Programme will now face further challenges in the transforming situation. This leads to the need of rethinking how ICTs and e-learning can be best used for supporting modernisation and capacity building. On the other hand, it is worth assessing, according to our latest knowledge, what e-learning is worthwhile using for - and what not.

In order to support a really efficient and beneficial European integration in the years to come, it is most timely and relevant to survey and evaluate the experience available, with the analysis of achievements of the numerous EU projects from the perspective of the joining countries and also, in a wider sense, in the context of the East-West collaboration and assistance.

EDEN invites the professional community of e-learning, distance and flexible education, to join the conference, to share expertise, draw up new scenarios, elaborate on strategies, gather and analyse best practice experience and contribute to the definition of relevant policies for the enlarged Europe. As usual, the EDEN Conference will be not only an informal environment to establish new professional partnership but also a forum to discuss how to improve partnership models in the enlarged Europe.

Conference Themes

A variety of themes are offered both in the general professional and the EU enlargement-specific context, which form the main strands of the conference. Therefore, among others, you can attend presentations on

e-Learning for modernisation and capacity building

- Building the knowledge and information society in the enlarged Europe - The role of e-learning and distance education in the modernisation process;
- Impact and achievements of the EU eLearning programme - New tasks and opportunities;
- The globalisation debate and the added value of the European approach to distance and e-learning;
- New interpretation of the outreach dimension of open, distance and e-learning: the experience with performance of the new methods across borders, in developing regions and remote areas;
- Capacity building in the forefront: the human and social capacity development by distance and e-learning. Examples of national and regional initiatives;
- The role of institutional and organisational aspects in capacity development - Maturity of focus: from fragmented attitude to system development approach;

Distance and e-learning development in perspective

- Modernisation of education in policy focus: Evolution of the discourse about ODL and e-learning throughout the decade;
- The "process of maturing": Consolidating the distance and e-learning practice for the new knowledge societies;
- Critical survey and evaluation of experience in the field - What is ODL/e-learning good for and what not? The state of art of the technology-methodology development;
- The role of institutional transformation fostered by business processes: New partners and competitors in supplying education;
- Contribution of distance and e-learning to the Bologna process, changes in universities, helping institutional development;

The EU enlargement context

- The new challenges created by the EU enlargement for the human resource development through open, distance and e-learning. The context of EU regional policies;
- Looking ahead to new perspectives: Status of distance and e-learning and preparation of joining of the new member countries - Policies, resources, needs, realities;
- Survey and analysis of the experience of East-West collaboration and assistance, in the process of the EU accession - Experience and best practice;
- Building up new partnerships, identifying new interests, collaborations and markets - inside and outside the EU.

Who Should Attend?

- Professionals of distance and e-learning, open and flexible education and training;
- University faculty and researchers with experience in European educational co-operation projects;
- Educational policy professionals with interest in modernisation and capacity building;
- Experts and practitioners involved in educational programmes in regional development context;
- Companies in the field of development and delivery of distance and e-learning;
- Teachers and trainers from vocational and non-vocational education;
- Representatives of national professional organisations and bodies;
- Specialists with relevant experience of East-West collaboration and assistance initiatives.

The registration is now open. Please visit the continuously updated Conference pages for further details about the event <http://www.eden.bme.hu/contents/conferences/annual/Budapest/BudapestHome.html>

NEW CHALLENGES AND PARTNERSHIPS IN AN ENLARGED EUROPEAN UNION

Open, Distance and e-Learning
in Support of Modernisation, Capacity Building and
Regional Development

EDEN 2004 Annual Conference

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**Budapest University of Technology and Economics
Budapest, Hungary**

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