

EADTU Strategy 2019 – 2025

# Mission and strategy

# Mission

EADTU is Europe’s leading institutional association for open and distance higher education, and is at the heart of the modernisation agenda of European universities. We are committed to the creation of a European Learning Space in accordance with the Bologna Declaration and the ET2020 Strategy[[1]](#footnote-1).

European open and distance higher education maintains an openness to learners through three critical features:

* student-centred teaching based on high quality learning environments;
* openness to learners through flexible, inclusive structures and methods that take higher education to students when and where they need it, increasingly but not exclusively through online technologies;
* networked education and mobility, where students can learn across national, sectoral and institutional boundaries.

EADTU’s mission is to empower and support its members by:

* supporting the development of online, open and flexible higher education:

1) Universities are encouraged to use the full potential of digital modes of teaching and learning in blended bachelor and master degree education, using innovative course design, collaborative learning communities and transnational classroom initiatives. Membership of EADTU therefore will be extended by including leading universities in blended education. This extends EADTU’s mission by supporting universities in transition to blended and online education and by sharing expertise and experiences in this field.

2) Universities are encouraged to organize flexible and scalable continuous education/continuous professional development on line to meet the needs of the people at work, the economy and the knowledge society in general. These short foundation and postgraduate programs should be lead to awards and qualifications which fit in the European Qualification framework

3) Universities are encouraged to organise open education by MOOCs and to examine how badges and micro-credentials can be used for the recognition of MOOCs in academia and in companies

* developing and sustaining sectoral leadership at national, European and international level;
* leveraging its quality assurance capabilities by creating an internationally recognized quality system in online, open and flexible higher education;
* supporting the extension of learning opportunities and student mobility through networking and collaboration between institutions.

EADTU members share a commitment to equality of opportunity, the lifelong development of talent, and to meeting the needs of the economy, culture and civil society in Europe at regional, national and pan-European levels.

# The benefits of EADTU membership

Defining and delivering benefit to its members is central to the development of EADTU’s strategy. The Supervisory Board believes that the Association should deliver benefit through its work in the European positioning of member universities, in supporting the enhancement of quality in education and research, in international collaboration, and through member related services. Specifically, EADTU seeks to deliver benefit by:

* extending member influence in the development and implementation of European higher education policy through collective action. Members of EADTU are therefore part of shaping policy, which impacts directly their own organization.
* building the brand of online, open and flexible higher education across Europe, particularly in nations where it remains under-developed. Members of EADTU therefore benefit from institutional reputation building and enhancement of their own institution’s reputation.
* supporting the development of member institutions’ brand and reputation across Europe. Members’ own institutional interests will be served by sharing resources with other institutions with which interests are shared, in order to build the reputation of the sector.
* providing services that enhance the quality of the member institutions’ performance and provision;
* enabling and supporting pan-European networks with common challenges and interests in the sector. Members will thus be able to find other institutions and individuals in them, whose knowledge and energies will benefit them directly.
* providing access to up-to-date authoritative information and analysis on matters of relevance to members at European level.
* providing members with mechanisms to foster partnerships and to facilitate collaboration and piloting, including opportunities of funding, in order to extend their international horizons, find partners and synergies to support innovation.
* participation and exposure in annual conferences, master classes, specialised workshops, seminars and experts meetings and platforms.
* participation in initiatives led by EADTU, such as OpenupEd[[2]](#footnote-2), EADTU’s MOOCs initiative, E-xcellence[[3]](#footnote-3), the EADTU programme on quality in e-learning and EMPOWER, EADTU’s pool of experts in online, open and flexible education.

This analysis underpins the strategic direction of the Association and should form the basis for the regular appraisal, by the Secretariat in collaboration with members, individually and collectively, of the added value delivered by EADTU to its members.[[4]](#footnote-4)

# Strategic objectives, 2019 -2025

# In order to achieve EADTU’s mission over the coming years, we propose the following 10 strategic objectives.

## Policy

1. Develop a vision for the role of blended, online, open and flexible education in the development of European higher education, and influence European policy in accordance with that vision
2. Promote high quality online, open and flexible learning within the European learning space, to identify and serve the target student groups for online, open and distance learning
3. Taking the leadership in the area of online, open and flexible education and sharing its expertise and experience to empower European universities in the deployment of online education
4. Contributing to the EHEA by the integration of continuous education and MOOCs and by developing on line models of international collaboration for university networks (e.g. networked courses/curricula and online/virtual mobility, international distributed classrooms)

## Community of expertise

1. Be a valued source of information and policy intelligence to members
2. Develop and maintain tools and services of benefit to members
3. Develop and maintain models for cooperation between members
4. Extend the scale and scope of active participation of members in the work of EADTU

## Brand and reputation

1. Strengthen the brand of EADTU
2. Strengthen the position of EADTU through partnerships with other European and international organisations

We see these objectives as inter-relating and mutually reinforcing. The performance of the association will be reviewed annually against these objectives, which will themselves be kept under annual review and updated as necessary.

In defining these objectives, we recognise two particular challenges that EADTU faces. The first is the considerable diversity of the Association’s membership in terms of history, scale, function, and policy context. This means that members will inevitably bring a wide range of needs and expectations to their interaction with EADTU. This in turn adds to the complexity of the task of implementing a common set of strategic objectives and evaluating our success against those objectives. The second challenge is to match the expectations of members against the resources of the Association. The online, open and distance higher education sector is small in comparison to the sector as a whole, and this necessarily means that, in order to keep the costs of membership as low as possible, permanent staffing of the Secretariat is small. The active participation of members is therefore fundamental to the well-being and sustainability of the Association.

Taken together, these ten objectives have three important characteristics:

* 1. They are broadly defined. This enables a balance between strategic continuity and the selection of actions that are achievable with measurable outcomes. We envisage that the objectives themselves will remain in place for a number of years, providing the fundamental baseline against which members will be able to understand and evaluate the benefits of the Association.
  2. They encompass both the more routine day to day functions of the Association, which have been in place throughout its 30 years of existence, and strategic directions that respond to the particular circumstances we envisage in the next five years.
  3. They are both inward and outward facing. They address the enhancement of the internal work of the Association, supporting members within the boundaries of the online, open and distance higher education sector as it is currently defined, as well as the developing relationship between our sector, the wider field of European higher education, and European policy.

## Policy

### Objective 1 Develop a vision for the role of blended, online, open and flexible education in the development of European higher education, and influence European policy in accordance with that vision

Blended and online education is the only way forward to upscale access to higher education institutions and ensure quality of higher education systems, within a cost effective way.

The commission foresees an extension of the approaches and structures which have been developed by the online, open and distance sector across higher education as a whole. We see this as the right time for EADTU to refresh its vision of the role of online, open and distance higher education in Europe, and thus to ensure that its members are well-placed, across Europe, to play a leading role in future developments. EADTU will closely follow and contribute to these policy initiatives in cooperation with the Commission. EADTU’s ability to speak to the Commission with an authoritative voice depends on such clarity of vision, but equally on a broad consensus amongst members about our shared future.

EADTU will respond actively to the European Commission’s range of policies that can directly and indirectly benefit from online, open and flexible higher education, including the *modernisation agenda*, the *Opening Up Education* initiative, the *Digital Agenda,* and *Horizon 2020.* These policies present significant opportunities and challenges to EADTU. EADTU will therefore develop in the Rectors and the Associations meetings a medium and long-term vision for the development of higher education and the role of online, open and flexible education.

### Objective 2 Promote high quality open and flexible learning within the European Learning Space, to identify and serve the target student groups for open and distance learning

In the 1990s, EADTU played a leading role in extending opportunities for online, open and distance learning to the accession countries, and it was as a direct result of that work that its membership expanded to include associations of conventional institutions in many of those nations. Now, the need to promote state of the art online, open and flexible learning across Europe is on EU’s agenda for which we see a continuing leading role in supporting higher education in the member states to build and extend flexible, open and online provision. Dedicated online, open and distance institutions and networks will have a continuing, and in some cases, an expanding role, in serving the market segment that EADTU members address: part-time students, often from non-mainstream backgrounds, generally aged over 25. EADTU will work across Europe to identify and serve our market segment. In doing so, we will work in collaboration with key stakeholders including national governments, other university networks, UNESCO, etc.. EADTU, particularly through the Secretariat working alongside experts drawn from member institutions, will also contribute to the development of new and existing provision through master-classes and seminars: we envisage an extension of this activity.

The promotion of online, open and flexible learning will be further supported by the continued development of EADTU’s work on quality assurance in e-learning. In cooperation with other key organisations in Europe, EADTU will extend the scale and scope of E-xcellence as a European wide instrument.

### Objective 3 Take leadership and share expertise and experience to empower European universities in the deployment of online, open and distance learning

This objective represents a significant new direction for EADTU, because for the first time, we aspire to work directly with willing partners in the rest of higher education, to share our members’ expertise with institutions that seek to become more open, responsive and flexible. In so doing, we believe that we can play a leading role in support of the *Opening Up Education* initiative and the wider modernisation agenda up to 2020. We consider that an active stance towards these changes by the online, open and distance sector is most likely to serve the long term interests of member institutions, who, thereby, will be in a stronger position to embed themselves further in European and national developments, and secure the influence that they merit.

Objective 4 Contributing to the EHEA by the integration of continuous education and MOOCs and by developing on line models of international collaboration for university networks (e.g. networked courses/curricula and online/virtual mobility, international distributed classrooms)

Beyond the traditional task of degree education, HEIs should also meet the growing needs for updating knowledge and skills for the economy by continuous education and continuous professional development.

The three cycle system of degree education should be complemented with short and flexible learning programmes for continuous education leading to qualifications compatible with the EQF and with a mutual recognition framework between EADTU members.

This will anticipate on the increasing needs of the workforce with limited study time available and longer and changing careers.

## Community of expertise

### Objective 5 Be a valued source of information and policy intelligence to members

EADTU’s particular role, complementing the work of other European networks, is to focus on European, national and institutional strategy and policy in the online, open and flexible higher education sector. Our primary target audience amongst members for this objective is therefore senior leaders and managers with faculty-level and institutional responsibilities.

EADTU adds value to its members’ own information and policy intelligence functions by:

* identifying common issues that members are facing and enabling the rapid sharing of strategic responses.
* acting as the primary conduit to members on emerging European policy directions.

### Objective 6 Develop and maintain tools and services of benefit to members

EADTU has a strong record in this domain, particularly in respect of the quality benchmarking, virtual mobility, OERs and MOOCs and networked curricula. Our basic operational approach, outlined in the Appendix, ensures that the development of tools and services and their embedding in practice across the sector, is driven by the expertise and needs of members. In the next five years, we see the scope both to further deploy existing tools and services through the development of distributed service and expertise centres, and the creation of new tools and services.

### Objective 7 Develop and maintain models for cooperation between members

Member cooperation has been a perennial feature of the work of EADTU in the past, and is the primary mode of member engagement outside the formal governance of the Association. We have also been notably successful in attracting EU funding for collaborative projects involving many members. These projects provide the essential dynamics for a networked association and an important channel through which to enable the participation of a wider range of staff in member institutions and associations, extending beyond the senior leadership.

Member cooperation for 2019 – 2025 will have a focus on enriching course offerings in networked curricula and increased knowledge sharing within EADTU’s research community. EADTU will assist members in setting up and/or extending collaborations in research and curriculum development and to raise learning opportunities of their students by innovating the mobility schemes. Member-driven collaboration for projects such as MOOCs, joint/dual degrees, (virtual) mobility and other domains will be supported by EADTU by a shared database of relevant call, project ideas and partner search.

We further anticipate that the relationship between the online, open and distance sector and its economic and social context will become a growing focus for member collaboration, particularly in relationship to understanding and measuring the economic and social outcomes of higher education for our students, and the associated impact on national and regional economic and social development.

### Objective 8 Extend the scale and scope of active participation of members in the work of EADTU

The Association depends on four primary modes of member participation:

1. Membership of formal governance structures and participation in decision-making processes;
2. Attendance and presentation at the annual conference and other national and Europe-wide seminars and events
3. Partnership in externally funded projects hosted by EADTU.
4. Participation as experts in the provision of EADTU services, such as the e-xcellence quality benchmark.

EADTU’s success and effectiveness in future will be in direct proportion to the breadth and depth of engagement in all four domains. Recently, we have taken steps to enhance the operation of EADTU’s governance to widen active engagement of the membership of The General Board, and we see further opportunities to increase depth of participation.

## Brand and reputation

### Objective 9 Strengthen the brand of EADTU

EADTU works in a decentralised manner, building on the members’ expertise to generate the European impact it now represents. EADTU represents its members to strengthen their brand, individually and collectively, with a special focus on the quality and leadership they represent in the field of online, open and flexible education. It is EADTU´s aim to lead on policy and strategy on emerging innovations. Topics addressed are therefore in direct relation to the EHEA.

It is however important that we keep under review and periodically refresh our brand, based on a thorough understanding of stakeholder perceptions. Our intention is to focus on the brand and reputation of the Association first of all amongst its own members, and to ensure that this is strong and sustainable. To achieve this, we will need to be attentive to the breadth of awareness of and engagement in EADTU activities within each member, and to ensure that members understand and value the objectives, activities and achievements of the association. In parallel, we will continue to attend closely to our reputation amongst decision-makers in the European Commission and Parliament, the former of which we already have a strong relationship with.

EADTU will use opportunities to position and strengthen its brand by strong visibility including:

* representation of EADTU and its members in EU consultation meetings;
* the establishment of EADTU expertise and service centres, including master class offerings;
* presenting EADTU and its members on the ODL-platform by Studyportals, as co-founder;
* keynote presentations by EADTU and its members at related conferences;
* initiating and promoting EADTU platforms including OpenupEd, E-xcellence, and Networked Curricula, with the focus on the quality of provision of EADTU members;
* the EADTU Annual Conference, with high quality representation of key experts in the field.

### Objective 10 Build partnerships with other international organisations and positioning EADTU.

We have strong relationships with key international organisations for the online, open and flexible higher education sector. We value and have positive contact with other international and European organisations whose work extends to online, open and distance higher education sector. In all cases, in the coming period, we will aim to maintain and to strengthen these links by seeking to work with partners on topics of common interest.

1. ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index\_en.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. www.openuped.eu [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. e-xcellencelabel.eadtu.eu [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. A full overview of benefits of EADTU membership can be found at [www.eadtu.eu/current-members/benefits-of-being-a-member.html](http://www.eadtu.eu/current-members/benefits-of-being-a-member.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)