2024

IN 24 PAGES

Europe's leading institutional association for **online, open** and **distance** higher education

annual report

EADTU

Table of Contents

MCE

MCE (Modularisation of Continuing Education by Micro-Credentials), an EU-funded initiative, examines the adoption of micro-credentials across Europe, It aims to address challenges in standardization, policy development, and recognition of micro-credentials, engaging experts, institutions, and events for further progress.

MEETINGS & EVENTS

The MCE-consortium organised key meetings and events throughout the year. In February, an on-site partner meeting in Maastricht focused on organizing institutional seminars, piloting new micro-credential formats, and planning future activities.

The partnership also collaborated with the European MOOC Consortium (EMC) and EADTU to launch the Microcredential Monitor (see p. 20), a platform for sharing developments and best practices in the field. Additionally, MCE contributed to significant events, including the EADTU Summit (see p. 17), an e-Sealing Microcredentials event (see p. 20), and the I-HE2024 conference in Limassol. These efforts have been central to promoting the adoption and standardization of micro-credentials in Europe.

OUTCOMES

MCE examines the learning perspective on modularization and microcredentialing to better adapt microcredential formats and institutional learning services to the specific characteristics of the CEPD learner. Studies across Europe and systematic reviews have provided valuable insights into learner expectations, motivations, and preferences, shaping evidence-based strategies.

The project has also supported institutional and policy development through analysis of existing frameworks, recommendations aligned with EU policies, and case studies testing modularization approaches. These efforts aim to create transformative, learner-centered microcredential programs that meet evolving societal, economic, and educational needs.

See all project outcomes

CLINICS &
MENTORSHIPS

EUROPEAN DIGITAL EDUCATION HUB

The European Digital Education Hub (EDEH) is an initiative of the European Commission, funded by the Erasmus+ programme (2021-2027) and operated by a consortium of eleven organisations.

EADTU is actively participating in the hub by organizing expert support to digital education professionals through online clinics and mentorship programmes.

During an online clinic, hub members can discuss with a high-level European expert about the challenges they or their organisation are facing.

Experts provided tailormade guidance on topics like:

- micro-credentials
- hybrid, blended and online distance course design
- international collaboration and virtual mobility
- online assessment
- diversity, inclusion and equity

Beyond the online clinic sessions, the Hub offered mentorships specifically focused on your personal area of interest, goals or actions. Mentorships were organised in 3 hour sessions of 2 hours each.

Mentors are high-level European experts in the field of digital education matched based on individual needs of mentees.

Learn more about the Hub

ADMIT

The ADMIT Project aims to establish the educational and ethical foundations necessary for the effective integration of Large Language Models and generative AI into higher education.

MEETINGS & EVENTS

ADMIT project progress was promoted in key meetings and events throughout the year, including the I-HE2024 conference in Limassol.

On December 11-12, the consortium met in Maastricht, Netherlands, to discuss progress on their work integrating generative AI and large language models (LLMs) into higher education.

The first day focused on updates in key project areas, such as the impact of LLMs, ethical guidelines, and professional development for educators, with each work package presenting findings and discussions on challenges. Day two centered on peer learning, highlighting course design and practical strategies for integrating AI into teaching and learning.

OUTCOMES

The project yielded three main outcomes in 2024.

First, a report examining the impact of Generative AI and LLMs on higher education, highlighting both opportunities and challenges in educational practices. Second, a feature report identifying trends in policies and practices regarding the use of LLM and Generative AI within partnerships. Third, a fact sheet addressing the ethical issues surrounding the technology behind LLMs and Generative AI, raising awareness about their implications.

See all project outcomes

OPEN EU

The **OpenEU** alliance, coordinated by the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC), brings together 14 universities and 13 academic, business, rural, municipal and civil society associations from across Europe to create a pan-European open university.

OpenEU will contribute to the digital transformation of higher education institutions and the integration of technology in teaching and learning

OpenEU is one of the 14 new alliances awarded funding as part of the European Commission's latest European Universities initiative call for proposals.

A pre-kickoff meeting of the alliance took place on the 25th of October, hosted by the Open University of Cyprus and EADTU.

As an associated partner, EADTU will contribute its expertise to several workpackages and to the alliance's growth.

Visit the **OpenEU website** to read more about the alliance.

I-HE2024
CONFERENCE

From 23 - 25 October 2024, EADTU's Innovating Higher Education Conference was organised in Limassol, hosted and organised in close cooperation with the Open University of Cyprus.

The conference combined keynotes, paper presentations, panel sessions, workshops and a dedicated research track coordinated by the Center for Open Education Research (COER).

Around 250 experts from the world of online, blended and distance learning shared their expertise.

An impression (in pictures) is available **here**.

In advance of the conference, the EADTU General Assembly took place. The majority of EADTU members was represented in the meeting. An overview of all EADTU member insitutes can be found on page 23.

From left to right: **Lucie Rohlíková** (University of West Bohemia), **Teodora Balau** (European Commission), **Erato Sarri** (Open University of Cyprus), **Päivi Kananen** (JYU Open), **Margrét Jónsdóttir Njarðvík** (University of Bifröst), **Jukka Lerkkanen** (JYU Open), **Uwe Elsholz** (FernUniversität in Hagen), **Mychelle Pride** (Open University), **Petros Pashiardis** (Open University of Cyprus), **Pastora Martínez** (Universitat Oberta de Catalunya), **Ada Pellert** (FernUniversität in Hagen), **Virgínia Sanchez** (Universitat Oberta de Catalunya), **Stavros Stavrou** (Open University of Cyprus), **Theo Bastiaens** (Open Universiteit), **Klaus-Dieter Rossade** (Open University), **Carla Oliveira** (Universidade Aberta), **Fernando Val** (UNED), **Marc-André Carle** (Téluq), **Diogo Casa Nova** (Universidade Aberta), **George Ubachs** (EADTU), **Manolis Koutouzis** (Hellenic Open University), **Nicola Paravati** (Uninettuno) and **Rahel Hutgens** (FernUniversität in Hagen).
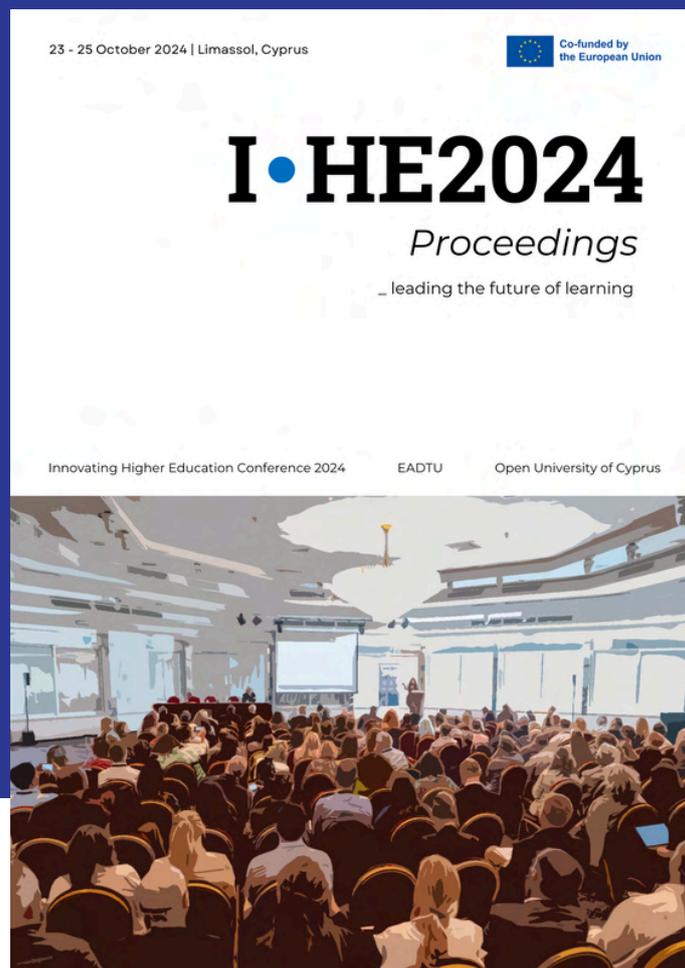
I-HE2024
PROCEEDINGS

The **Proceedings** of the Innovating Higher Education conference 2024 are now available. The publication, including the message of Limassol, is a reflection of a successful conference.

The Innovating Higher Education Conference, held on 23-25 October 2024 in Limassol, Cyprus, featured papers on key topics such as online blended and hybrid education, generative AI and large language models, diversity and inclusion in online learning, teaching and assessment innovations, leadership and future trends, and open education with skill development

In total, 27 full papers were published in the proceedings.

3 papers were selected for a selection procedure of the Online Learning Journal (OLJ) and the newly established Journal of Open, Distance, and Digital Education (JODDE).

23 - 25 October 2024 | Limassol, Cyprus

Co-funded by the European Union

I•HE2024

Proceedings

_ leading the future of learning

Innovating Higher Education Conference 2024   EADTU   Open University of Cyprus

EMC

The European MOOC Consortium (EMC) strenghtens the credibility of massive open online courses (MOOCs) as a learning approach in higher education by taking a leading role in developing the discourse relating to MOOCs and other innovative developments in online learning in Europe.

The Common Microcredential Framework **(CMF)** is a collaborative effort by leading European online education providers, including FutureLearn, FUN, iMooX, AI Campus, German University of Digital Science and NAU.

CMF enables the creation of high-quality MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) across various European languages and offers academic credits based on the European Qualification Framework (EQF) and other recognized national qualification frameworks. It unifies qualification standards, promoting transparency and cross-border recognition of qualifications within Europe's higher education institutions.

EMC Microcredential Offerings

Discover EMC's courses from top European institutions offering recognised microcredentials—designed to support career advancement, skill development, and personal growth.

WEBINAR WEEKS

EMPOWER supports collaboration and sharing of expertise between European universities and provides specialist advice and guidance for institutional leaders on the latest developments in online, open and flexible education.

QA AND AI FOR THE FUTURE OF MICROCREDENTIALS

In this webinar week, EADTU explored the transformative impact of AI in Education. The event discussed how AI is reshaping traditional assessment methods, enhancing personalized learning, and automating administrative tasks in the world of digital education. Key topics included how AI can help educators manage large groups of students more effectively, the types of questions generative AI can or cannot answer reliably, and how AI might be used to foster better student results.

Based on recent insights from EADTU's task force on Retention, the series delved into current perspectives on student attrition, emphasising the importance and challenges of meeting diverse learner needs. It addressed:

- Key factors contributing to student drop-out in online, open and distance higher education.
- Proven strategies to boost retention and support.
- Practical insights into curriculum design, leveraging data-driven support systems, and lifecycle interventions.

RETENTION AND STUDENT SERVICES IN ONLINE AND DISTANCE EDUCATION

PROJECTS (1/2)

Besides leading projects such as MCE and ADMIT, EADTU is involved in various innovative projects as full or associate partner. Have a look at the projects below to see some of our work in 2024.

The **NEFELE** project proposed a training model, offered online, through Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC). The project concluded in 2024, with a final partners meeting in Naples, Italy.

All project results are available on the **project website.**

ENCORE combines data-driven techniques and a qualitative pedagogical approach to promote the use of OERs and ESCO's skills taxonomy in creating resources for teachers.

In 2024, EADTU hosted various ENCORE **events** to support educators in adopting OERs. The first webinar introduced the ENCORE platform and findings on Open Badges, micro-credentials, and AI-driven skills intelligence, addressing challenges like digitalization and climate change. Later events explored emerging technologies and practical applications, including a panel on Generative AI's impact on education and a workshop with educators focused on collaborative use of the ENCORE platform and OER-based teaching.

ENCORE

ENriching Circular use of OeR for Education

PROJECTS (2/2)

The **XR2LEARN** project aims at establishing a cross-border innovation community for XR (extended reality) in learning, bringing XR technology providers, application designers, education experts, application developers, endusers and decision makers in direct access to communicate, collaborate and matchmake interests, enabling also bottom-up innovation creation.

Visit the **website** for recent events and outcomes.

TUNED promotes a lifelong learning dimension in the HE context in approaching fluid classrooms, providing new and innovative pedagogical tools based on rooted psychological constructs on self-regulation learning.

On October 23, EADTU hosted the TUNED project's final conference, "Mastering Self-Regulated Learning," in Limassol, Cyprus, and online. Educators and researchers explored TUNED's MOOC and serious game, tools designed to enhance teaching through self-regulated learning. The event featured keynotes by experts, interactive sessions, and the TUNED Contest, recognizing innovative virtual lesson designs.

SUPPORTING RETENTION

In May 2024, EADTU launched a report on 'Supporting Retention and Student Services in Online and Distance Education'.

The report by EADTU's working group on Retention and Student Services addresses concerns over declining enrollments and dropout rates in open and distance learning universities. It discusses historical and contemporary perspectives on student attrition, emphasising the need for universities to adapt to diverse learner needs. The report aims to identify factors contributing to early departure in online and distance learning and shares successful approaches adopted by EADTU members to enhance student support and retention.

The report is structured into three chapters covering reasons for retention issues, curriculum design, data usage, and lifecycle intervention points for student support. A dedicated website will be published soon as well, growing dynamically to reflect the changing challenges and institutional responses regarding retention and student services.

Contributing institutions include Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED), University of Jyväskylä (JYU), Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC), the Open University, FernUniversität in Hagen and Anadolu University.

GREEN CAMPUS

In October 2024, EADTU launched a report on 'Green Campus Initiatives in Online and Distance Education'.

The report by EADTU's Task Force Green Campus explores the efforts of distance and open Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to foster sustainability through green campus initiatives.

The report examines how HEIs are reducing their carbon footprint, enhancing energy efficiency, and encouraging sustainable behaviours in education, research, and campus management. Case studies and good practices are integrated to provide a comprehensive view of strategies that promote environmental responsibility within HEIs, offering a roadmap for other HEIs to align with sustainability goals, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The findings emphasise the importance of education for sustainable development (ESD) in shaping future sustainability leaders and promoting global environmental responsibility.
Enjoy the read,

Contributing institutions include the University of Jyväskylä (JYU Open), Anadolu University, the Open University (OU), Universidade Aberta (UAb), FernUniversität in Hagen, UniDistance Suisse | Switzerland, Université TÉLUQ, and Fraunhofer-Institut für Umwelt-, Sicherheits- und Energietechnik (UMSICHT.

Green Campus Initiatives in Online and Distance Higher Education

2024 SUMMIT

EADTU's annual **EADTU-EU Summit** is a returning opportunity to discuss latest developments and new policy lines in higher education.

The Summit is a unique moment in bringing together European umbrella organisations and stakeholders in Higher Education (HE) as well as the national representatives of national governments.

On the 8th of May 2024, **the 12th EADTU-EU Summit** took place in Brussels.

We look back at a successful event with many interesting presentations. A full recording of the on-site event is available below.

The event covered key topics such as retention in open and distance education, with André Biederbeck (FernUni Hagen) presenting insights from the EADTU Task Force. Experts discussed how AI and big data can personalize education, followed by Kate Lister's talk on student and staff mental wellbeing in online learning environments. The summit concluded with a panel discussion on its findings, moderated by EADTU President Theo Bastiaens.

// LEADING THE FUTURE OF LEARNING

EADTU-EU SUMMIT 2024

BRUSSELS // **WEDNESDAY 08 MAY**

SHARING EXPERTISE

On May 16th and 17th, EADTU organised a two-day Staff Training Event on support services in Open and Distance Teaching Universities, hosted by the **FernUniversität in Hagen.**

It was a unique opportunity for support staff to meet, share expertise, and learn from their peers about different ways to organise support structures for open, online and distance education.

The gathering focused on the topics internationalisation; retention and student services; AI use for staff and communication. All of this alongside an exclusive tour of FernUni's film studios.

All presentations (slides) are available on **EADTU's slideshare page.**

ENVISIONING REPORT 2024

In 2024, EADTU published the eighth edition of the **Envisioning report** for Empowering Universities, by the expert pools of the Empower programme.

In this 8th edition on new modes of teaching and learning we cover initiatives related to: Applying AI and Learning Analytics, Enhancing Engagement and Support, Optimizing cross-institutional Studies and Innovating Skills and Competencies.
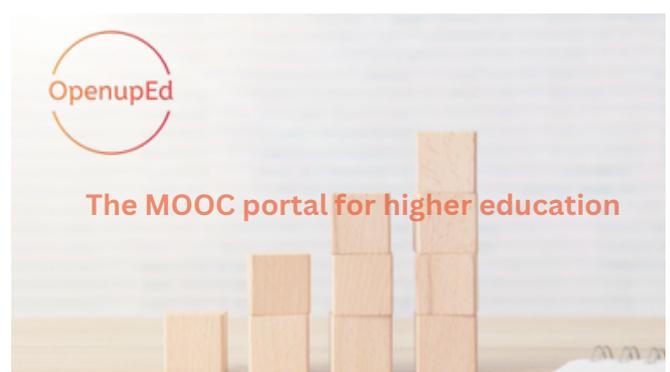
MOOCS & MICROCREDENTIALS

In 2024, EADTU solidified its leadership in advancing microcredentials and MOOCs, enhancing access to flexible, high-quality education across Europe.

The year EADTU explored the potential of tamperproof microcredentials at an **event** dedicated to e-sealing and credential integrity. The discussions centered on leveraging the European Digital Credentials platform to ensure the security and transparency of microcredentials.
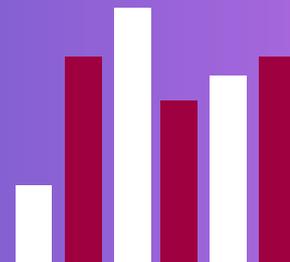
Another highlight of the year was a **podcast episode** featuring George Ubachs, Managing Director of EADTU and a recognized authority on online and distance education innovation. George represents the ICDE Focal Point on Quality for Europe.

In collaboration with EMC and the MCE project, EADTU published on the **Microcredential Monitor**, tracking developments in Europe's microcredential landscape.

Through **OpenupEd**, a dynamic network of European universities, EADTU expanded its offerings, incorporating a growing number of microcredentials to support lifelong learning and career development. OpenupEd, a member of the European MOOC Consortium (EMC), remains a key platform for fostering education that benefits both individuals and society.

Sealing the Deal. Tamperproof microcredentials with the EDC platform

BRUSSELS // WEDNESDAY 08 MAY

New episode: George Ubachs

MICROCREDENTIAL MONITOR

OpenupEd

The MOOC portal for higher education

ONLINE TRAFFIC, SOURCES & SOCIAL SHARING 2024

498 presentations shared by EADTU on Slideshare

EADTU uploaded 38 **videos** to Youtube

EADTU sent **27 newsletters & alerts** to (roughly) 57.000 subscribers
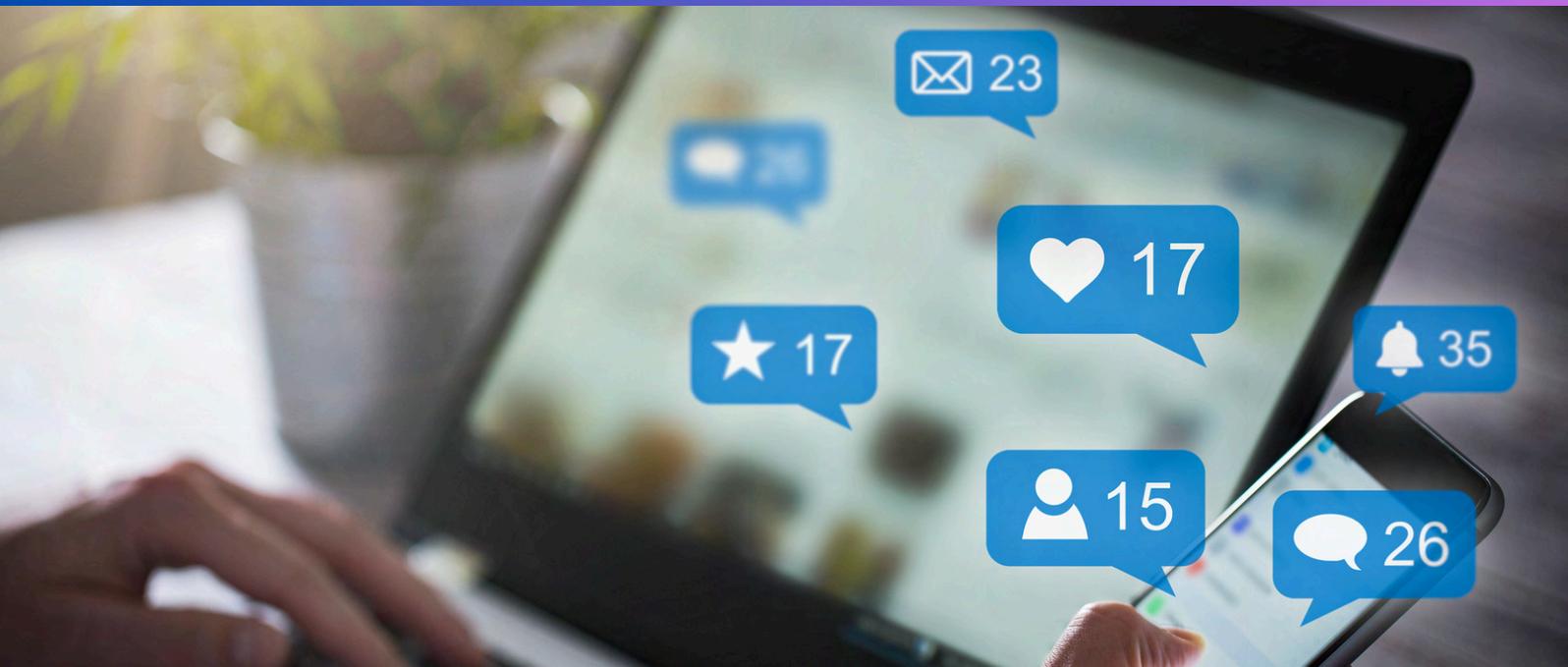
1.721 followers on X in 2024

1.387 followers on Linkedin in 2024

17 public events hosted by EADTU with **1500+ registrations**

933 followers on Facebook in 2024

EADTU TEAM

GEORGE UBACHS
MANAGING DIRECTOR

ALESSANDRA ANTONACI
PROGRAMME MANAGER

STEFAN MEULEMAN
ACADEMIC SERVICES

BEAU NIJSTEN
PROJECT MANAGEMENT

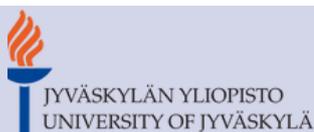**MIRIAM DE BIE**
FINANCIAL OFFICER

JULIA EZCURDIA
ACADEMIC SERVICES OFFICER

EADTU MEMBERS

EADTU and its members have built up a long experience and in-depth expertise in the field of online, open and distance higher education. Our activities are set up in permanent interaction with our member institutes and their experts. More about EADTU's members can be read on the dedicated **page** on our website.

COMING SOON...

INCLUDE

We're excited to announce that the IncluDE project will Kick-off in January 2025. The project, funded by the EU, will be coordinated by EADTU. IncluDE is a collaborative project dedicated to creating a fairer, more inclusive higher education system. The project focuses on developing an Inclusion Reference Framework that higher education institutions can use to assess their practices, identify gaps, and plan for improvements.

TASK FORCE PERSONALISATION

EADTU members represent a great variety of policies, approaches, expertise and experiences in the field of personalisation, which we are sharing within dedicated Task Force. Results of the Task Force are expected in October 2025.

To keep track of all running and upcoming task forces, you can keep an eye on our **webpage**.

WEBINARS

Follow us on **Eventbrite** to receive notifications on upcoming webinars by EADTU, including an upcoming EMC webinar on personalised learning pathways.

EMBED+

EADTU will be a partner in EMBED+ , a project focusing on improving blended education in European higher education institutions. The framework and resources hub created by the project will help institutions enhance blended practices at the course, program, and institutional levels.

Have a look at all our projects **here.**