Highlights of the Groningen Declaration Network

Introduction

The Groningen Declaration Network (GDN) seeks to promote the academic, professional, and global mobility needs of citizens by bringing together key stakeholders in the Digital Learner Data Ecosystem through its activities, especially its Annual Meeting.

GDN Mission: Aiming to deliver on digital learner data portability. The GDN brings together key stakeholders through a declaration of intent. Signatories cooperate on a voluntary basis, seeking not standardization but rather convergence. The main goal includes developing best practices and globally accepted standards for secure, citizen-centred consultation and portability of digital learner data.

GDN Vision: Towards a trusted digital learner data ecosystem. In 2022, the Network constitutes a global, broad, and interconnected ecosystem including large digital learner data depositories, educational institutions, government bodies, and other stakeholders. Participants in this ecosystem work together to guarantee trust by encouraging safe administration, processing, consultation, exchange, acceptance, and recognition of digital learner data, in addition to appropriately verified paper-based records, using the best standards and technology available.

GDN Ethical Principles: learner centred at its core. Committed to learner privacy and data protection; transparency; responsible practices; interoperability; openness; learner and institutional freedom to choose delivery options; integrity; diversity; respect for the law; auditability; good fellowship; and access.

Strategic GDN Objectives: Focused on best practice. To share best practices in digitally secure systems and to coordinate policies on the purpose, feasibility and cost-efficiency of worldwide exchange of digital learner data; system compatibility; comparability and interoperability; digitized assessment practices; and adherence to national or federal privacy rights.

Background

Created in 2012 at a historic meeting in Groningen, the Netherlands, and established legally as a foundation in 2016, the Groningen Declaration Network (GDN) brings together key stakeholders to create an ethically centered Digital Learner Data Ecosystem. With a Board of Directors representing every continent, the GDN stands as the most inclusive global effort to date aimed at enabling digital learner data mobility. In person meetings have been held in Groningen (The Netherlands), Beijing (China), Washington (United States), Málaga (Spain), Cape Town (South Africa), Melbourne (Australia), Paris (France), Puebla (Mexico), and Groningen (Netherlands). Due to COVID-19, the 2020 in person annual meeting (which was to be held in Delhi, India) had to be cancelled and was provided later in the year as a virtual conference. In 2021, the annual meeting was held as a hybrid event, blending a virtual conference with an in-person event in beautiful Ottawa, Canada. In 2022 the Annual Meeting returned to Groningen where it all began. In 2023, the annual meeting will be held in Jordan on Oct 17, 18, and 19. New in 2023 is the Asia Pacific Regional Symposium in Singapore on April 20 which will be an in-region convening opportunity to engage digital experts in furthering the opportunities for standards informed data exchange and credential portability. These meetings have been a key catalyst to the establishment of digital learner data depositories and exchange networks in and between China, the United States, Australia and New Zealand, Africa, Canada, and numerous countries in Europe.

The GDN is a diverse, global and interconnected ecosystem which includes large digital learner data depositories, educational institutions, government bodies, third party academic data processors and innovative companies, all seeking to facilitate educational and professional mobility. At the level of regional international organizations, the GDN maintains relations and works with platforms organizations and associations from around the world such as UNESCO, the Commonwealth of Learning, the ENIC-NARIC Network, the Asia Pacific Network of National Information Centres, DUO - Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs, UNESCO-IESALC, the UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, CAMES, the Conseil Africain et Malgache pour l'Enseignement Supérieur, and many more.

The GDN community is committed to learner privacy and data protection, transparent and responsible practices, and the recognition of digital learner data and qualifications, the GDN aims to ensure that citizens have access to secure digital records of their own educational achievements and can share them with whomever they choose, whenever they choose. The embrace of opportunities to present skills and educational attainment that respond to emerging industry and employer needs has also been a strand of the GDN activity in recent years.

For those displaced by conflict, the loss of academic records presents major hurdles to relocation and pursuit of education and skills development. The GDN has thus supported initiatives dealing with migrant data mobility, resettlement and access to services otherwise denied. Such initiatives include the European Qualification Passport for Refugees (EQPR), the Article 26 Backpack Initiative, the African Qualifications Verification Network (AQVN), and Kiron Open Higher Education.

The goal of the GDN is a global, equitable, accessible Digital Learner Data Portability environment. One of the largest global issues to this end is a fundamental lack and imbalance of global data and digital capacity. The GDN presents opportunities to convene practitioners and supporters to continuously share digitalization development and use cases, strategies, and tactics that are working, expand the number of new projects moving forward globally where capacity is lacking, and continue to bring new ideas as technologies and methods evolve to the fore to help achieve the goal: To expand the global exchange of digital learner data, and to increase learner and professional mobility in underserved regions of the globe through regional convenings, training and the establishment of digital exchange pilot projects.

The objectives of the Groningen Declaration Network (GDN) meetings are:

☐ To further the mission and vision of the GDN.

☐ To raise revenue to sustain the operations of the GDN.

☐ To provide a forum to share best practice, new ideas, and networking opportunities.

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