



Strategic Plan

2025 – 2030



THE
GDN
NETWORK

February 2025

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Paving the Way to a Better Future



The **Groningen Declaration Network (The GDN)** is committed to advancing global academic and professional mobility through the ethical and secure digitization of student data. This strategic plan outlines the GDN vision, mission, goals, and strategic initiatives to support achieving objectives over the next five years. By fostering collaboration across sectors and geographical boundaries, the GDN aims to create an inclusive and interoperable digital ecosystem by catalyzing the creation of a Network of Networks.



Vision

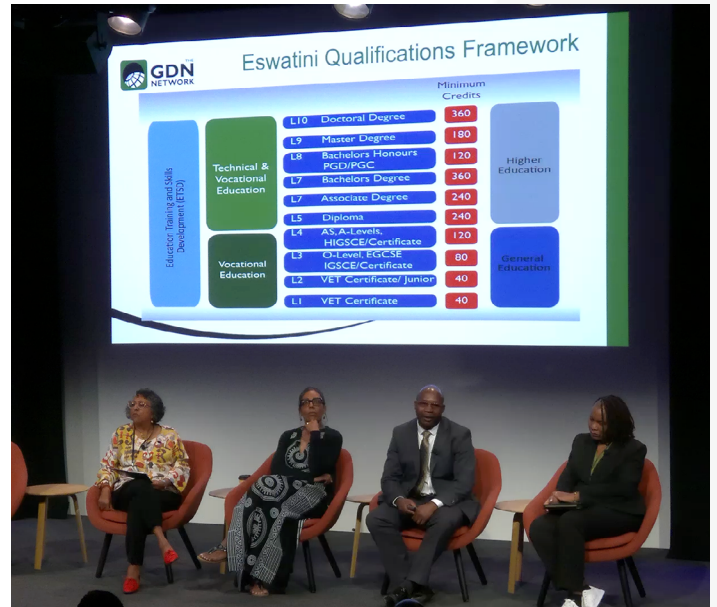
The GDN aspires to be the leading global network that supports and promotes the secure and ethical exchange of digital student data and credentials, facilitating academic and professional mobility worldwide.

Mission

The GDN promotes global convergence in digital learner data by advancing data ownership, privacy, access, sharing, compatibility, recognition, and acceptance. The main goal of the Groningen Declaration, which first opened for signatures on 16 April 2012, is to develop best practices and globally-accepted standards for secure, citizen-centered consultation and portability of digital student data.

What does it mean to create a “Network of Networks”?

A “Network of Networks” in the context of digital credential ecosystem development focuses on fostering collaborative partnerships with governments, industry leaders, institutions, standards bodies, and stakeholders.



By inspiring and supporting research, projects, knowledge dissemination and technology innovations, we aim to build consensus, promote the adoption of open standards, and ensure interoperability —ultimately creating stronger support systems for learners.

Through this approach, we seek to catalyze collaboration across **regional and national networks**, by fostering shared principles and solutions that facilitate the seamless exchange and recognition of digital academic credentials.



Through the “Network of Networks” collaboration framework, **we strive to align all our communities** around common objectives, enabling transformative change and faster access to education and employment opportunities **for learners**, while driving innovation and global adoption of digital technology solutions at scale and in inclusive, transparent, and accessible ways.

Why the GDN Network Matters

Through **convenings, webinars, research, projects and other collaborative activities**, the GDN seeks to deepen a shared understanding of the different contexts around the world, build knowledge regarding digitization opportunities and best practice, and explore and contribute to initiatives and actions for moving a Network of Networks forward for digital credentials that is based on learner centricity, respect for privacy and local autonomy, interoperability, open standards, and innovative digital architecture. The practical outcomes of these activities include creating intentional **Calls to Action** and **collaborations**.



In all its efforts, the GDN seeks to **inspire use of innovative technology and approaches that align with its statutes, ethics, and goals**. It does this while respecting institutional and geo-political autonomy and authority, and in alignment with the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#) and UNESCO's normative instruments such as the [Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education](#).



By collaborating with leading experts and changemakers the GDN is committed to inclusivity, fostering adoption and input from all organizations vested in providing service and support to learners and enabling bridge building between the rich history and traditions of the past towards a new and expanded future for the learner mobility space.

Strategic Goals

1

Deliver Thought Leadership in Credential Exchange, Standards, and Interoperability Towards Creating a Network of Networks

2

Expand Network Participation, Engagement, and Reach

3

Enable Research and its Application

4

Ensure Long-term Organizational Sustainability



Strategic Initiatives and Activities

Deliver Thought Leadership Towards Creating a Network of Networks

1

- Promote and inspire the GDN's thought leadership through Annual Meetings, webinars, and international activities and projects.
- Broaden activities and outreach to showcase policy and research expertise to the network and public stakeholders, fostering collaboration, dialogue, and GDN inspired-and-led multi-lateral projects. Goal: One major project per year

Expand Network Participation, Engagement, and Reach

2

- Revise and implement a new outreach strategy to expand the Network's presence and educate stakeholders on digital credential exchange through innovative resources.
- Foster new partnerships and co-location/co-activities support with key stakeholders in education, government, industry, and non-profit sectors. Goal: Two initiatives per year

Enable Research and its Application

3

- Move forward with research projects aligned with the GDN mandate (e.g., regional case studies, interoperability, governance, displaced persons). Goal: Two per year
- Establish MOUs with like-minded organizations and standards bodies to further cooperation and research. Goal: Two per year
- Inspire, create, and support special collaborations and projects (e.g., DigiLink). Goal: One project per year

Ensure Long-term Organizational Sustainability

4

- Strategically revision the GDN's image, messaging, and activities using proven methodologies.
- Establish a reimagined, mature corporate structure, such as 501(c)(3) status in the U.S. and ANBI status in the Netherlands, to create operational infrastructure with regional capacities and enhance support for projects, grants, and donations.
- Renew and expand participation by increasing signatories, patrons, and formal agreements (e.g., letters of intent, memoranda of understanding, other instruments).
- Review and refine the GDN's operational infrastructure.

Current and Planned Activities

Planned Activities	External	Internal
2024/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Meeting in San Diego, USA (October 2024) • Development and delivery of new webinars at least once per month with thought leaders • Delegation and seminar visits to Australia, France, US, Groningen, Norway, Canada • Listening tour of community • Renewal and expansion of patron and signatory participants • Call for future convening hosting sites • Publication of thought papers (samples: interoperability, regional case studies, governance) • Launch of new brand and website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review, revitalization, and transition of operational and resources and infrastructure • Revitalizing and expanding the corporate structure and statutes • Revisioning and revitalizing brand, strategic messaging, and communications, including the website and social media engagement plan • Board and Strategic Advisory Council membership renewal
2025/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued expansion of delegation visits and presentations to strategic world locations and events • Development and delivery of knowledge building courses (at least two in 2025/26) • Continued development and delivery of webinars with thought leaders (at least once per month) • Continued expansion of delegation visits • Call for future convening hosting sites • Expert consultation and support for current projects (e.g., DigiLink, governance, refugee mobility project) • GDN & PCCAT Regional Learning Summit in Toronto, Canada (May 2025) • Annual Meeting in Oslo, Norway (October 2025) • Establishment and delivery of working groups, including a governance working group • Grant and project outreach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board and Strategic Advisory Council membership renewal • Continued revitalization of corporate and operational structures • Continued growth and sustainability • Creation of a publication arm for the GDN • Expansion of MOUs, patrons, signatories, and service offerings • Evolution of the corporate structure

Current and Planned Activities

Planned Activities	External	Internal
2026-2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Meeting in Cape Town, South Africa (October 2026) • Continued expansion of delegation visits and presentations to strategic world locations and events • Continued development and delivery of knowledge-building courses and webinars • Call for future convening hosting sites • Expert consultation and support for current projects (e.g., DigiLink, governance, refugee mobility project) • Planning for future annual meetings and expansion of course delivery and publications work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board and Strategic Advisory Council membership renewal • Continued revitalization of corporate and operational structures • Establishment and delivery of working groups, including a governance working group

The GDN Community

The GDN is an international community that includes vocational institutions, higher education institutions, government, industry partners, not-for-profit organizations and associations, and experts and researchers in the fields of recognition, learner mobility, and technology.



By working together across the digital credential ecosystem, the GDN aspires to advance an interoperable and seamless Network of Networks for credential exchange to enable opportunities for learner mobility and lifelong learning.

How the GDN Works

Practically, the GDN achieves its work across five dimensions:

- **advancing knowledge** capacity building, supporting and **inspiring** the creation of **credential tools and data and document exchange digital highways** to advance seamless exchange;
- **identifying** and encouraging the use of **best practices** for credential exchange in the areas of governance, standards, and business model design and delivery;
- **promoting** and encouraging adoption of important legislative and other instruments such as **Conventions and privacy regulations**;
- **advancing quality assured practices and policies for credential recognition**;
- and **enabling** all forms of **interoperability** to help learners access future education and jobs.

Recent Efforts for Collaboration

The Network's recent efforts for collaboration spans sectors and borders, enabling interoperability through open architectures, standards, and principled approaches to digital solutions for learning and employment mobility.

By working together, we can accelerate progress across geopolitical boundaries. The GDN participants share common goals, fostering alignment and expanded collaboration through dialogue, multilateral projects, letters of intent, and memoranda of understanding. These mechanisms enrich and transform the digital credential highway, advancing interoperability on multiple fronts.

The GDN Background

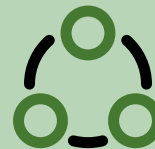
The Groningen Declaration Network was founded in 2012 in Groningen, Netherlands, by a small group of thought leaders, including the National Student Clearinghouse, the Center for Student Services and Development (CSSD), Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs (DUO), the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), and the University of Melbourne.



Led by its first Executive Director, Herman de Leeuw, the Network grew from its founding vision to a global board and community representing over 40 countries. In 2022, Joanne Duklas succeeded Herman to lead the next generation of the GDN.

The GDN has inspired national initiatives such as MyCreds | MesCertif in Canada and My eEquals in Australia, advanced UNESCO’s lifelong learning goals, and fostered global collaboration in credential and data mobility.

The GDN holds annual fall convening opportunities to advance its mandate which highlight 100+ international speakers. These bring together thought leaders from around the world to engage and move forward research, collaborations, and activities in the credential and data mobility space.



Recently, the GDN’s efforts have expanded to include thought leader webinars, case studies, publications, regional delegation visits, and more. Each activity represents an intentional effort to **catalyze national and trans-national credential sharing and digitization capacities.**

By bringing together a global community, the GDN supports evidence-based roadmaps, blending local and international initiatives to create a “Network of Networks.”

Proud of its impact, the GDN remains committed to inspiring change on regional, national, and international levels.

Seamless

Privacy Compliant

Quality Assured

Interoperable

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