



INTERNATIONAL  
COUNCIL FOR OPEN AND  
DISTANCE EDUCATION



# Annual Report

2023



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# Greetings from the ICDE President

Reflecting on 2023 feels a little like welcoming a new spring season – a time filled with optimism, opportunity, and growth. For the first time in what feels like a long time, we experienced rays of normalcy in parts of our personal journeys. This sentiment was shared by many of the members that I was fortunate to have conversations with at the World Conference in San Jose. The energy expressed throughout the year was almost palpable. Personally, 2023 has left me with a renewed sense of excitement about what the Open, Flexible, and Distance Learning (OFDL) community will achieve in the coming years.

I have remarked before that the importance of creating equitable access to quality learning through OFDL is difficult to overstate. In a world facing additional and escalating conflicts in war torn regions, greater divisiveness in geopolitics, and accelerating economic pressures, ICDE members continuously respond with a sense of urgency, professionalism, and utmost quality to support learners from around the world. We occasionally need to step back to appreciate that while members are always striving to do more, the learners of today are already transforming their lives and communities through the learning created by the OFDL community.

Together, members and the team at the ICDE Secretariat have made significant progress toward achieving the goals outlined in ICDE's strategic plan. 2023 marked the third year of the ICDE's four-year strategic plan. As we look to 2024, we will have the opportunity to reach toward our next ambitions as we create the next strategic plan. In the meantime, it is heartening to witness the steadfast commitment and dedication of members toward achieving our strategic initiatives from within the lens of our values of Access, Equity, Equality, Collaboration, and Connectivity.



From a personal perspective, 2023 marks the end of my time as President of ICDE. It has been an incredible four years serving in this role. I have been and will always be honored and humbled to be part of such an incredible community. My sincerest thank you goes out to all members of ICDE for their dedication, commitment, and engagement to the OFDL community. The world is continually becoming better because of the efforts of every one of you individually and as a collective.

***“In a world facing additional and escalating conflicts in war torn regions, greater divisiveness in geopolitics, and accelerating economic pressures, ICDE members continuously respond with a sense of urgency, professionalism, and utmost quality to support learners from around the world.”***

**- Neil Fassina, ICDE President**

I would like to extend a sincere thank you to the Norwegian Government for their ongoing support of ICDE. Their trust and confidence in the ICDE global community to make a difference in the lives of people on a global scale is both appreciated and inspiring.

The commitment of the secretariat team is amazing. They are a professional, committed, and tireless team that dedicates their talents to the betterment of the OFDL community, the value brought to ICDE members, and making the ICDE the amazing membership environment that it is. To Torunn and the entire team at the ICDE Secretariat, thank you.

Respectfully,

**Neil Fassina**  
President of the International Council for Open and Distance Education

# Reflections from the ICDE Secretary General

85 years of making education accessible to all

*The headline was chosen for ICDE's anniversary webpage, purposefully built to tell the story of the development of the association from the correspondence through the distance, open and online education age.*

In 2023, ICDE celebrated 85 years since its foundation in Canada in 1938, and 35 years since the Permanent Secretariat was established in Oslo, Norway.

The celebration culminated with a special anniversary panel session at the ICDE World Conference in Costa Rica titled: "*ICDE at 85: The story and impact of open and distance education*". The room was packed, not only because of the delicious birthday cake being served, but also because the theme clearly interests today's educators, who hardly any longer have a choice of whether or not to provide online or flexible/hybrid programmes to some extent.

While the marking of an anniversary provides the opportunity to look back at our history, last year's celebration also gave ICDE members an opportunity to reflect upon their relevance, purpose and contribution to society, today and onwards. Storytelling is a powerful instrument to create awareness, and to reach new audiences who are not already a part of the distance education community. This work aligns well with the ICDE Global Advocacy Campaign, which started in 2021 and is continuously being rolled out through local and regional task forces, led by ICDE members. Thanks to our members taking this lead, ICDE is able to increase the impact of its global advocacy, and "enable greater regional and national influence through members and partners", as per the Strategic objective number 1.



***“Storytelling is a powerful instrument to create awareness, and to reach new audiences who are not already a part of the distance education community.”***

**- Torunn Gjelsvik, Secretary General**

In the post-Covid era, the need to advocate for quality, inclusive education through various learning modes and technologies is no less important. Limitations and shortcomings in quality assurance and accreditation systems as well as regulatory frameworks can still constitute major obstacles to the goal of inclusive and equitable access to education for all.

During 2024, ICDE will develop a new strategy for the next four years. The Secretariat team and Board members are eager to hear from as many members as possible, and a structured consultation process will be conducted. We are enduring uncertain times, with escalating conflicts, wars and financial depression, while also being impacted by disruptive technologies with enormous potential for optimized learning and increased productivity. It gives hope, but at the same time implies a risk of exacerbating existing inequalities.

Building on ICDE's 85 years long history, we must continue to stand together as a global community. Inclusive and equitable access to education and lifelong learning is about social justice and human rights. There is a potential for our advocacy and storytelling, which could reflect this even better in the years to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Torunn Gjelsvik". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Torunn Gjelsvik  
Secretary General



# This is ICDE



**340+** members and partners



**70+** countries in all world regions



Impacting over **15 million students** across all continents



Non-profit NGO hosted by **Norway**



Consultative partnership with **UNESCO** since 1969



**6** employees, **4** different languages

## Our work includes:

- Creating a worldwide network of online educators, policymakers, and innovators who collaborate on projects and initiatives, sharing best practices and industry knowledge.
- Publishing and contributing to reports, surveys and articles on emerging topics in the field of OFDL.
- Facilitating intercultural cooperation at our various conferences, summits, and events.
- Campaigning and advocating for progress and recognition of OFDL on a worldwide basis, through our members.

# 85<sup>TH</sup> Anniversary

**85 years of making education accessible to all**

This year, ICDE celebrated 85 years since its establishment in Canada. From handwritten postal letters to innovation in the digital age, Open, Flexible and Distance Learning (OFDL) has come a long way since 1938 - and ICDE has been at the forefront of this exciting journey.

ICDE marked this special anniversary by highlighting the contributions of its community of over 320 members and partners who strive for universal access to education worldwide, through a dedicated campaign website, a social media campaign, a video and a special anniversary session during the ICDE World Conference in Costa Rica.

## 1988 and Beyond: ICDE Secretariat gains a permanent home in Norway

2023 also marks 35 years of support from the Norwegian government. In 1988, the Norwegian government invited ICDE to establish a permanent secretariat in the country, and since then has provided the organisation with an annual grant to support its operations and mission of furthering the international development of OFDL.

The establishment of a permanent secretariat in Norway occurred in conjunction with the 14th ICDE World Conference, which was held in Oslo in 1988. The conference was attended both by Norway's Head of State, His Majesty King Olav V, and the country's Prime Minister, Gro Harlem Brundtland.



**1938**

ICDE was founded in 1938 in Canada as the International Council for Correspondence Education (ICCE).



**1969**

8th ICCE International Conference at UNESCO in Paris. The start of ICCE's official partnership with UNESCO.



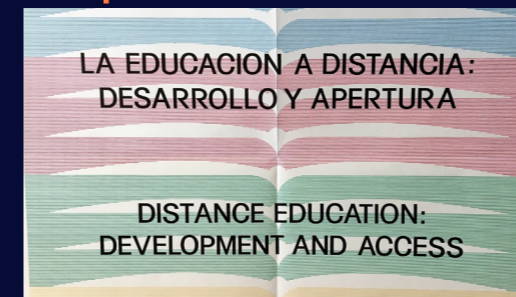
**1988**

ICDE World Conference in Oslo, with keynote speech from the Prime Minister. ICDE invited to establish a permanent Secretariat in Norway.



**1982/83**

Transition from ICCE to ICDE (International Council for Distance Education). First issue of the ICDE Bulletin published.



**1990**

15th ICDE World Conference in Caracas, Venezuela. The first time an ICDE conference was held in Latin America.



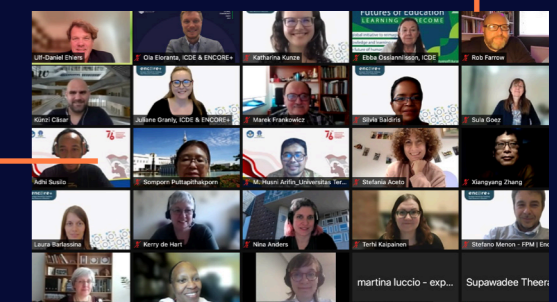
**2001**

20th ICDE World Conference held in Düsseldorf, Germany, focused on the transition to web-based information.



**2023**

85th anniversary session with distance education legends at the 29th ICDE World Conference in Costa Rica.



**2020-2022**

As a response to the COVID-19 outbreak, ICDE launched #LearningTogether campaign and organised its first virtual conference.



# 2023 in Brief

The first main event of the year was the Lillehammer Lifelong Learning ICDE Conference, hosted by Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences in the winter olympic city of Lillehammer. This was the first in-person ICDE conference since before the pandemic, but 2023 turned out to be an event-intense year involving many of ICDE's members across the globe.

Throughout the year, the ICDE Secretariat actively participated in 13 conferences in 11 different countries across 6 world regions.

## Activities

### 1. Saudi Arabia

The ICDE Secretary General was an invited speaker to the GTEL (Global Trends in E-learning) conference in January and the FESCIOF - Future of Education, Science and Cultural International Organization's Forum in March, both events took place in Riyadh.

### 2. Norway

The Lillehammer Lifelong Learning ICDE Conference, hosted by Norway University of Applied Sciences took place in February under the theme "Lifelong learning for lifelong employability". Nearly 400 delegates from over 30 countries participated and contributed to the Lillehammer Lifelong Learning Roadmap.

### 3. Senegal

The Secretary General participated together with partners from the ICDE

Francophone OER project at the eLearning Africa conference in Dakar in May.

### 4. Ireland

The ICDE Secretariat participated at the 2023 EDEN Annual Conference, hosted by Dublin City University in June. The Secretary General was an invited speaker to the conference closing panel.

### 5. Turkey

The ICDE Secretary General gave a keynote presentation at the AAOU (Asian Association of Open Universities) conference in Istanbul in September. The

topic was about the DNA of Open Universities, and why it is critically needed in the age of digitalised Higher Education. She also met with the Open Praxis Editorial team from Anadolu University, who hosted the event.

### 6. Mauritius

The ICDE Secretary General participated in the High-Level Roundtable for Vice Chancellors, hosted by the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and the Open University of Mauritius.

### 7. China

The Secretary General was an invited speaker at the International Conference on Promoting Lifelong Learning in Higher Education, organised by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning and hosted by the Open University of Shanghai.

### 8. Canada

Project and Development Manager, Juliane Granly, presented the ICDE-coordinated OER project ENCORE+ at the Open Education Global Conference in Edmonton together with project partners.

### 9. France

Senior Adviser, Anaïs Malbrand, was an invited panelist and participated virtually at the Festival d'Automne du Numérique (FAN) 2023, hosted by the French Digital University.

### 10. Costa Rica

The 29th ICDE World Conference, with the theme: *Joining Hands in Peace for the Futures of Education*, took place over 4 days at the Costa Rica Convention Centre in San José, hosted by UNED Costa Rica. Over 600 delegates from all world

regions participated at this first ICDE World Conference since before the pandemic.

### 11. Germany

Senior Adviser, Anaïs Malbrand, participated at the OEB conference in Berlin in two sessions together with Francophone partners, organised by the French Digital University.

### 12. USA

The Secretary General gave a virtual keynote presentation at the Global Leadership Impact Summit, organised by the Online Learning Consortium. The topic was about the value of international collaboration and how to make global policies locally relevant.



# The Year 2023 in Highlights



ICDE at the EDEN Conference in Dublin in June.



Torunn Gjelsvik presenting at the International Conference on Promoting Lifelong Learning in Higher Education in Shanghai



Lillehammer Lifelong Learning ICDE Conference, February 2023



Female leaders in OFDL meet at the AAOU conference in Turkey.



ICDE and friends celebrating the official 85th anniversary with ICDE memorabilia



Torunn Gjelsvik at the Global Trends in eLearning Conference in Saudi Arabia



Torunn Gjelsvik (middle) with Open Praxis editorial team from Anadolu University: Hasan Ucar, Aras Bozkurt, Serpil Kocdar, and Cengiz Hakan Aydin



Meeting new and familiar faces at the 29th ICDE World Conference 2023.





# 2023 ICDE Events

2023 was a big year for ICDE events. Not only did we organise the Lillehammer Lifelong Learning ICDE Conference in Norway in February, but we also hosted the first ICDE World Conference in four years.

## Lillehammer Lifelong Learning ICDE Conference 2023

In February 2023, almost 400 participants from all world regions gathered in the small town of Lillehammer, Norway for the Lillehammer Lifelong Learning ICDE Conference 2023.

During the three conference days, delegates exchanged knowledge and experiences, learned from expert speakers, and immersed themselves in the present and future of lifelong learning for lifelong employability.

This was the second time ICDE and the Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences (INN) joined forces to organise this conference, which covered a broad range of topics related to lifelong learning key issues, trends, and best practices.

After receiving over 100 submissions from 31 countries, the conference programme catered to many different interests, and provided valuable, transnational perspectives. The proposals were condensed into more than 30 parallel sessions - with ICDE members well-represented in the programme!



## Looking ahead: The Lillehammer Lifelong Learning Road Map

Throughout the conference, participants were encouraged to share key messages, learnings and thoughts on the future of lifelong learning, by contributing to the [Lillehammer Lifelong Learning Road Map](#). Delegates had the opportunity to contribute by putting up Post-It notes on a board in the conference hall, or by visiting a dedicated website.

These contributions were summarised in a Road Map report - a set of recommendations to achieve lifelong learning for lifelong employability, intended for policy makers, education and public/private enterprises, and for educators and learners.





# 2023 ICDE Events

## 29th ICDE World Conference, Costa Rica

From 6-10 November, over 600 delegates gathered at the Costa Rica Convention Centre in San José, Costa Rica for the first ICDE World Conference in four years.

Under the theme, “**Joining Hands in Peace for the Futures of Education**”, delegates heard fascinating presentations from 11 keynote speakers representing all world regions, participated in a range of parallel sessions covering important topics within the field of OFDL, and were introduced to the warm hospitality and vibrant culture of Costa Rica.

### Celebrating ICDE’s 85th anniversary

The conference was an opportunity to collectively mark the 85th anniversary of ICDE, and a special session titled “*ICDE at 85: The story and impact of open and distance education*” was organised.

Attendees were served a special anniversary cake as ICDE veterans Alan Tait, Morten Flate Paulsen and Sir John Daniel took to the stage to share their lived experience of ICDE over the years - from as early as 1975 - in a lively discussion moderated by Anna Fredriksen from the ICDE Secretariat.

### Thank you to our global community

ICDE would like to thank all keynote speakers, presenters and panelists, and all the delegates who attended the conference.

We hope it has inspired you in seeking new opportunities for international collaboration through the global network of ICDE.



## Awarding excellence

The conference was also an opportunity to award excellence in the field, with the ICDE Prizes of Excellence awarded to outstanding individuals and institutions for their work:

- **Institutional Prize:** The Virtual University of Pakistan
- **Individual Prize:** Dr. Kam-Cheong Li
- **Prize for Lifelong Contribution to the Field:** Dr. Lorenzo García Aretio and Dr. Don Olcott Jr., FRSA

### Snapshot from the ICDE Secretary General: What did we learn at this ICDE World Conference?

- The concept of “**caring at scale**” is about meeting students where they are
- **Transparency** and **collaboration** across institutions, sectors and borders is pertinent to ensure increased recognition of our field
- **AI** challenges teaching, learning and assessment, but we might be heading into the **golden age of learning**
- The **transformative power of education** is now widely recognized and OFDL institutions are well positioned to take the lead in **upskilling and reskilling** the workforce for tomorrow
- **Micro-credentials** and **Open Education Practices** can be a game-changer for **lifelong learning**
- We need to address **epistemic justice** and consider if **decolonisation** of Higher Education should be extended to nature and structure
- It is about time to radically **rethink assessment** of students for their well-being
- We need to **support teachers** in adapting their role appropriately to the changing needs of the students

**Welcome to the 30th ICDE World Conference in 2025, taking place in Wellington, New Zealand!**



# The ICDE Global Presidents' Forum 2023

The [ICDE Global Presidents' Forum](#) was organised as a pre-conference event at the World Conference in Costa Rica. This forum is developed specifically for Presidents, Vice-Chancellors, Principals, Rectors, and CEOs of ICDE member institutions and organisations, and is chaired by the ICDE President.

This year's topic was built on the 2022 ICDE Global Presidents' Forum, which concluded that Open, Flexible and Distance Learning (OFDL) has its unique DNA that should be further defined. In a pre-session survey, participating leaders were asked to describe their top three priorities for their institutions in the year to come. A key theme that emerged from participants' priorities is, at some level, the need to communicate to interest groups outside their community the importance, value, and impact of OFDL. A need for a "brand refresh" was thus identified, to explain the value of OFDL as a transformative power for sustainable education and social justice.

The forum therefore focused the discussions on how ICDE leaders may consider alternative messages and strategies to advocate for the growth of modern OFDL environments. ICDE President Neil Fassina challenged the leaders with the following key questions:

- **How can leaders effectively convey the complexity of modern OFDL environments using messaging that is understandable and accessible by the average person?**
- **What new approaches to advocacy can be used to ensure that this message is received by a wider audience?**

This was far from a theoretical exercise. The President divided the delegates into groups and tasked them to pitch their suggested messages and strategies, and to comment on them during the session. A summary document is under development, including key value propositions of OFDL identified by the participants. These propositions will nurture the ICDE Global Advocacy Campaign through new messages and strategies.



**Torunn Gjelsvik**  
Secretary General



**Anna Fredriksen**  
Communication and Administration Adviser

# Communication and Social Media in 2023

## Improving ICDE's online presence

In January 2023, ICDE launched its new website. The new design puts the needs of existing and potential members at its heart. Focus has been placed on increasing user friendliness, ease of use and accessibility, as well as creating a prominent Knowledge Centre for the distribution of reports, surveys and articles on the emerging topics in the field of Open, Flexible and Distance Learning. The new website also features an improved Members Directory.

## Increasing ICDE's visibility

Throughout 2023, ICDE has regularly published website articles and newsletters, showcasing the work of the organisation, our networks and the fantastic work of our members.

ICDE ran three social media campaigns in 2023:

### eLearning Africa

In May 2023, ICDE ran a social media campaign in the build-up to the eLearning Africa conference in Dakar, Senegal, with the aim of building more awareness of ICDE in the surrounding African countries and showcase the relevance of the ICDE Francophone OER Project.

### 29th ICDE World Conference in Costa Rica

In September and October 2023, during the lead-up to the 29th ICDE World Conference in Costa Rica, ICDE ran a campaign aiming to recruit participants for the conference, with a particular focus on delegates from the Latin American region.

### 85th anniversary

Starting in August, ICDE ran a 17-week organic social media campaign for the 85th anniversary of ICDE, highlighting milestone moments, member quotes, and key messages about the impact of the organisation through the years.

Combined, these campaigns reached more than 2.3 million social media users and attained almost 70,000 individual link clicks.

## 2023 Statistics

### Facebook followers:

2022: 4,362  
2023: 4,693

### LinkedIn followers:

2022: 2,521  
2023: 3,271

### Twitter followers:

2022: 5,751  
2023: 5,842

### Newsletter contacts:

2022: 12,935  
2023: 12,726

### Website unique visits:

2022: 58,278  
2023: 45,991

# New Collaborations and Partnerships in 2023

## ICDE partnered with three new associations in 2023:

- **European Training Foundation (ETF)**
- **International Labour Organization (ILO)**
- **Learning Planet Alliance (LPA)**

The first two collaborations emerged from the involvement of ETF and ILO in the Lillehammer Lifelong Learning ICDE Conference.



**ETF** is an EU agency supporting countries surrounding the European Union to reform their education, training and labour market systems. As an EU agency with a global mandate, focusing on neighboring countries for vocational education, training and skills development, ETF already works with civil society organisations relevant to the field. One of the ETF's goals is to better connect their partners with the policy level and bring the local levels closer to the national policies. ICDE and ETF jointly organized two virtual events in 2023, within the themes of Open Educational Resources (OER) for teachers and trainers and the role of digital pedagogies for upskilling and reskilling. The webinars attracted over 1,000 participant registrations and were translated into six languages.



**ILO** is the only tripartite U.N. Agency that brings together governments, employers and workers of 187 member states to set labour standards, develop policies and devise programmes promoting decent work for all humans. Pedro Moreno de Fonseca, Technical Specialist on Lifelong Learning at ILO, gave a keynote address at the Lillehammer Lifelong Learning ICDE Conference titled: *The hard road to Lifelong Learning – a strategy for recovery and a sustainable future*. ICDE and ILO has since then worked together on skills development in a lifelong learning perspective, including the co-organisation of a hybrid “Skills Fair on Quality Apprenticeships”, together with multiple partners, including ETF.



*“It is a strategic priority for ICDE to increase sectorial diversity among its partners and active stakeholders.”*

- Torunn Gjelsvik, Secretary General



**LPA** is a worldwide community of individuals and associations committed to reshaping the world through innovative learning and collaborative approaches. It consists of over 400 partners from nearly 200 countries who all commit to developing new practices and narratives to transform education. The last point in particular is well aligned with ICDE's Global Advocacy Campaign, which is outlined in another chapter of this report.



Another collaborative community which ICDE takes part in since 2019, is the **Network of Open Orgs**. The Network of Open Organizations emerged as a response to the adoption of the UNESCO OER Recommendation the same year, and consists of associations and practitioners who were already engaged in open education, and actively wanted to support the implementation of the OER recommendation. In 2023, the Network of Open Organizations decided to formalize and increase the visibility of its presence through the creation of the [website](#).



# ICDE Projects and Activities in 2023

## ICDE Global Advocacy Campaign

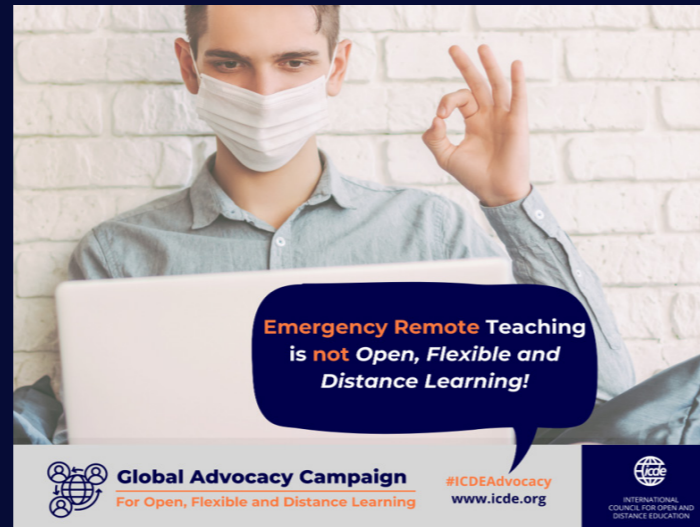
2023 marked the second year of the [ICDE Global Advocacy Campaign \(GAC\)](#) which experienced development of the established task forces from 2022 and new leads appointed in several regions.

The Asia task force has been extended with a national task force for the Philippines, while also working to identify the need for OFDL policies for universities at national and regional levels throughout Asia.

The Latin American task force has been expanded with two co-leads, UNIREDE for Brazil, and UTPL from Ecuador, in order to cover both Portuguese and Spanish speaking countries.

Furthermore, in 2023 ICDE appointed the Online Learning Consortium (OLC) as task force lead for the North American region. OLC has high ambitions for the campaign, aiming to also involve the student perspective.

The task forces presented the work they are doing with the ICDE Global Advocacy Campaign both at the Lillehammer Lifelong Learning ICDE Conference in February and the ICDE World Conference in Costa Rica in November.



## ICDE Global Doctoral Consortium

The [ICDE Global Doctoral Consortium \(GDC\)](#) is a virtual community platform for post-graduate and doctoral students that offers a network of expertise and advice from experts in the field of OFDL, and an exclusive research database allowing the future of the field to find relevant partners and opportunities for meaningful collaboration.

After the re-launch of the GDC in 2022, the network and programme continued to develop into the second year of this initiative. We saw an increased interest in our interactive virtual sessions, with registrations in the hundreds for select sessions hosted by our GDC Core partners Hamdan Bin Mohammed Smart University, Asia e University and the University of South Africa.



*The ICDE Global Doctoral Consortium at the ICDE World Conference in Costa Rica*

The programme developed throughout the year, culminating in a [final consortium day](#) for doctoral students at the ICDE World Conference. Over 30 students and researchers attended this special day which saw presentations, valuable individual feedback and concrete advice for those starting out in their academic careers. ICDE also learnt a lot from this experience and wish to thank co-hosts UNED Costa Rica and all those who participated for their input and innovative ideas for how to make education and the GDC more inclusive.

## GDC Core Partners



# ICDE Projects and Activities in 2023

## ENCORE+

2023 marked the final year of ENCORE+, a 3 years Erasmus+ project co-funded by the European Commission. The project has supported the uptake and innovation of Open Education Resources for Education and Business, involved 9 different partners from academia and business, and was coordinated by ICDE.

The European Network for Catalysing Open Resources in Education (ENCORE+) has over the last three years built a community for OER. The Network has contributed to an acceleration of the uptake of OER, boosted innovation and contributed to increased quality and relevance of learning and teaching through events, insights, and research outputs.

The project has integrated emerging technologies such as AI into its research and activities, strengthening the links between innovation, research and education, whilst showcasing innovative features and opportunities posed by AI and OER.



The ENCORE+ Network, with its innovative open ecosystem model has reached stakeholders across the world, in all world regions, through its events and activities – and have responded to the need for a community of stakeholders to come together to address challenges and opportunities with OER, share best practices, contribute to research and development and to collaborate across sectors and borders.

Throughout the project, the community has been invited to 17 thematic network events, including four in 2023, with more than 1,000 registrations received.

For the ENCORE+ Final Conference we invited the community to a four-day, virtual event consisting of eight interactive sessions between 30 November - 5 December. During this conference, the project partners and stakeholders had an opportunity to review and discuss the state of OER in Europe and look back at three exciting years of community building, research and activities.



**Juliane Granly**  
Project and Development Manager

## ENCORE+ Network Events 2023

All ENCORE+ Events have been hosted virtually by ICDE, and recordings of all events can be found [here](#).



**7 March 2023:** Sharing Innovation Practices around OER: Theory, Practice, Examples and Debates



**13 March 2023:** Quality by means of Transparency: The ENCORE+ Quality Transparency Framework



**21 March 2023:** From OER to OAI: What's next now we all play with ChatGPT?



**29 March 2023:** Organisational Integration of OER: Good Practice from HE & Business



**7 June 2023:** OER as a Catalyst for Business-University Cooperation



**15 June 2023:** OER as a Catalyst for Innovation in Higher Education



**27 June 2023:** OER as a Catalyst for Business Innovation and Employment



**30 November - 5 December 2023:** ENCORE+ Final Conference

- [Networking for OER: 3 years of ENCORE+](#)
- [Open to Open? Enabling Open & Multi Stakeholder Collaboration](#)
- [OER Technology - Advancing Interoperability and Standards](#)
- [Policy & Practice in Higher Education and Business](#)
- [Quality & Transparency](#)
- [OER Innovation & Business Models](#)
- [Catalysing OER: Policies & Recommendations for Europe](#)
- [Beyond ENCORE+: OER, AI & the Future](#)

## ENCORE+ Project Partners





# ICDE Projects and Activities in 2023



**Anaïs Malbrand**  
Senior Adviser for  
Events and Projects

## Francophone OER Project

The [ICDE Francophone OER project](#) reached a substantive policy footprint in 2023 when it was mentioned by both France and New Zealand in the consolidated report on the implementation of the OER Recommendation to UNESCO. It was presented to all UNESCO member countries during the General Conference of UNESCO in November.

Through this project, ICDE and its Francophone partners have produced multiple French versions of an online OER capacity building course, originally developed and openly licensed by the OERu in New Zealand. The ICDE coordinated Francophone OER working group was in 2023 supplemented by a more informal network of African OER experts, and new partnerships were built.

Project results have been presented at international conferences such as eLearning Africa conference in Dakar in May and the OEB Conference in Berlin in November.

An expansion of the project to Portuguese speaking countries is under development for 2024!



Anaïs Malbrand presenting the Francophone OER Project at the OEB Conference in Berlin, November 2023.

# ICDE Quality Network 2023

## The 7 Regional Focal Points of the Quality Network in 2023 were:

**African Region:** Prof. Obhajajie Juliet Inegbedion, Director of Quality Assurance, National Open University of Nigeria

**Arab Region:** Prof. Moustafa Hassan, Vice Chancellor for International Cooperation, Hamdan Bin Mohammed Smart University, United Arab Emirates

**Asian Region:** Prof. Ojat Darajat, Rector of Universitas Terbuka, Indonesia

**Oceania Region:** Dr Rajni Chand, Director Centre for Flexible Learning, University of the South Pacific, Fiji

**Latin American Region:** Mary Morocho Quezada, UTPL (Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja) and CALED (Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Quality in Higher Distance Education), Ecuador

**European Region:** George Ubachs, Managing Director, EADTU (European Association of Distance Teaching Universities), Netherlands

**North American Region:** Yaping Gao, Vice President, Member Services and Global Partnerships, Quality Matters, USA

The [Quality Network](#) advises the ICDE members and executive bodies on quality issues. They collect knowledge on the latest developments of quality work related to open, flexible and distance education within their institutions and regions, and represent institutional members of ICDE.

A new network Chair was appointed in January 2023: Dr. Souma Alhaj Ali, Director of Excellence and Governance at Hamdan Bin Mohammed Smart University took over after Prof. Emeritus Alan Tait from the Open University UK, who chaired the Quality Network from 2016 to 2022.

2023 was a productive year for the Quality Network. The report "[Global Quality Perspectives on Open, Flexible and Distance Learning](#)" summarises the ICDE Quality Network's analysis of quality issues from each world region. As a supplement to the report, a curated quality resource library was published on the ICDE members area, together with recordings from the "Ask the ICDE Experts Events", featuring the Quality Network members.

The network additionally gave regional perspectives on quality assurance of OFDL in a panel session at the ICDE World Conference in Costa Rica.

*"What we want to do through the Quality Network is to create a platform for discussion and sharing good practices, and for working together to develop effective strategies and solutions to deal with challenges facing OFDL and drive the transformation toward the future."*

- Souma Alhaj Ali, ICDE Quality Network Chair



# ICDE OER Advocacy Committee 2023

The OER Advocacy Committee ([OERAC](#)) works towards increasing the global recognition of Open Educational Resources (OER), and provides policy support for the uptake, use and reuse of OER. All members of the ICDE OERAC are appointed Ambassadors for OER.

The Committee is chaired by Prof. Dr. Ebba Ossiannilsson, Vice-President of the Swedish Association for Open, Flexible and Distance Learning (SADE) and Board member of ICDE.

The OERAC supports the ICDE Global Advocacy Campaign through a special Task force on OER. It also gives advice to key ICDE projects related to OER, such as the ICDE OER Francophone Africa initiative and the ENCORE+ Project.

Additionally, committee members present and represent ICDE in various international events and activities such as:

- *ICDE World Conference 2023, through a workshop on the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) related to Open Educational Resources (OER)*
- *ENCORE+ Final Conference*
- *Open Education Consortium Global Leadership Impact*
- *31 Encuentro Internacional de Educación a Distancia in Mexico*



**Ebba Ossiannilsson**  
ICDE Board Member and  
OERAC Chair

## OER Advocacy Committee Ambassadors

The ICDE OER Advocacy Committee consisted of representatives from 6 different world regions and included the following Ambassadors in 2023:

**Ebba Ossiannilsson**, Professor, Dr. Consultant and VP, Swedish Association for Open, Flexible and Distance Education (SADE), Sweden, (Chair)

**Melinda de la Pena Bandalaria**, Chancellor and Professor, University of the Philippines Open University, Philippines

**Xiangyang Zhang**, Emeritus Professor, Open University of Jiangsu, China

**Jozefa Fawcett**, Learning Specialist Consultant, UK

**Constance Blomgren**, Associate Professor, Athabasca University, Canada

**Chadia Mansour**, ICDE Student Member, Athabasca University, Canada

**Rosa Leonor Ulloa Cazarez**, Professor, Universidad de Guadalajara, Mexico

**Cristine Gusmao**, Associate Professor, Federal University of Pernambuco, Brazil

**Lilia Cheniti**, Associate Professor, Sousse University, Tunisia

**Claire Goode**, Learning and Teaching Specialist / Principal Lecturer, Otago Polytechnic, New Zealand

**Richard Kajumbula**, Associate Lecturer and Program Manager, Makerere University, Uganda



# Membership in 2023



**Sophia Javaid**  
Senior Adviser for  
Membership and  
Communication

ICDE membership counts 332 members in 2023: 174 institutional members, 52 individual members, 91 student members and 15 honorary members.

This is the highest number of members achieved in the last five years and sees a return to an upward trend for the institutional member category, increasing by four members from 2022.

Our student membership continues to grow at an exciting rate as our relaunched ICDE Global Doctoral Consortium appeals to PhD and EdD students and candidates in the field.

Sharing voices and views from all regions of the globe is central to ICDE operations. A diverse membership base helps us capture and share knowledge and opportunities across borders. During the strategic period 2021 – 2024, our recruitment efforts are focused on underrepresented regions in our membership, namely Africa, Oceania and Latin America. 2023 was a year of significant growth for our institutional and student members based in these regions, with most new members representing African and Latin American countries. We can attribute these results partially to the platform provided by the 29th ICDE World Conference in Costa Rica which helped create key connections with associations in the region and raise awareness of ICDEs mission and value in new communities.

Not only did our membership grow in 2023 with new and returning members, we also noted a continuing trend of fewer cancelled/expired institutional members, down to 10 from 16 in 2022, and from 35 in 2021.

## ICDE Membership 2023



### Institutional

Total: 174  
New: 26



### Individual

Total: 52  
New: 29



### Students

Total: 91  
New: 56



### Honorary

Total: 15  
New: 2

## ICDE Honorary Membership

2023 was a special year for the ICDE community as we granted [two Honorary Memberships](#) for the first time since 2019.

Honorary membership recognises individuals for their dedication to the field of Open, Flexible and Distance Learning and substantial support of ICDE. Recipients are awarded with lifetime ICDE membership. Only 13 Honorary Memberships have been granted during the last 85 years.

We were pleased to award two deserving recipients in 2023:

**Professor Emeritus Alan Tait** and **Professor Asha Singh Kanwar**.



***“ICDE members collectively make a difference and impact accessibility, equity, inclusion, diversity, human rights and social justice for all. At ICDE, all voices are heard, respected and equally valued. With ICDE, you are on the right track for the futures of education.”***

- Prof. Dr. Ebba Ossiannilsson, ICDE Board Member

***“ICDE has enabled the flow of knowledge and information across borders to bridge connections to members worldwide who share similar goals and objectives; this benefit has been invaluable to my studies and research.”***

- Rebecca Heiser, Doctoral Candidate in Distance Education, Athabasca University

# Financial Briefing

# ICDE Governance Activities in 2023

## About the ICDE Control Committee

The [ICDE Control Committee](#) shall ensure that ICDE's funds are used in accordance with applicable law, decisions and grants, and that the financial dispositions made are in accordance with the Constitution of ICDE and relevant board resolutions. The ICDE Control Committee shall further ensure that the internal financial control of the Secretary General is appropriate and justifiable.

The Control Committee has tasks that go beyond what an external auditor is concerned and must therefore carry out its own information gathering and checks in addition to the auditor's work.

The Control Committee shall ensure that the accounting is reliable and that the annual accounts and interim reports give a correct expression of ICDE's operations and financial position. When reviewing the accounts, the control committee shall assess the financial position, management and operation of ICDE.

## Comments of the Control Committee to the 2023 Accounts

The Control Committee has reviewed the minutes of the Board, as well as other documents the Committee has found necessary to review. The Control Committee has received all the information that was requested from the Secretary General and from ICDE's auditor Grant Thornton. The Annual Accounts for 2023 have also been reviewed.

The material presented to the ICDE Control Committee does not give rise to comments other than what is already stated in the notes of the accounts, and the Control Committee recommended that the Annual Accounts for 2023 is to be approved by the Board.

*Jakarta/Loja/Lillehammer/Oslo, 22 February 2024*

*Tian Belawati (Acting Chair), Santiago Acosta Aide, Mette Villand, Snorre Qveim-Leikanger*

*ICDE Control Committee*

## 2023 ICDE Board Election

Three ICDE Board seats were up for election for the period 2024 – 2027: two Institutional and one seat for the Individual member representative. The candidate nomination period took place from July to August 2023, and the voting period was held from September to October. The ICDE Nomination Committee approved six candidates for the two institutional seats, and eight for the individual seat, fourteen eligible candidates in total.

Following their renewed mandate, the Nomination Committee recommended three preferred candidates for the available seats. The committee is concerned with regional, gender and cultural diversity within the ICDE Board. It is tasked to take into account the present composition of the board, to give prominence to diverse competencies and backgrounds, and to consider renewal versus continuation of Board members.

Two candidates were elected by ICDE Institutional members, and one candidate was elected by ICDE Individual members. The announcement of the election results took place during the closing session of the 29th ICDE World Conference in November 2023.

The ICDE Board from 1 January 2024 (new or re-elected Board members in bold):

- Neil Fassina
- Ebba Ossiannilsson
- Melinda Bandalaria
- **Mark Nichols (re-elected)**
- **Mpine Makoe**
- **Andreia Inamorato**

## ICDE Board Meetings

The ICDE Board met four times throughout the year, one of the meetings took place face-to-face in conjunction with the ICDE World Conference in Costa Rica. These meetings led to key updates and governance decisions impacting activities for 2023.

ICDE members can access the ICDE Board minutes for 2023 on the [ICDE Members Area](#).



# ICDE's Main Partners and Stakeholders



**Torunn Gjelsvik**  
Secretary General

## Collaborating with UNESCO at the global policy level



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

ICDE has been in a formal consultative partnership with UNESCO since 1967. As the oldest and leading global membership association specializing in open, flexible and distance education, ICDE has become an increasingly important partner for UNESCO, during and post-COVID.

The ICDE consultative partnership grants ICDE members a voice at UNESCO and links them to relevant global policies. As awareness and commitment to the United Nations sustainable development agenda becomes more strategically pertinent to educational actors, the ICDE consultative partnership status with UNESCO is highly valued by our community.

A few highlights from the engagement with UNESCO during 2023:

- UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning was a partner of the Lillehammer Lifelong Learning Conference in Norway, and contributed with a workshop on Universities' role in building Learning Cities.
- The ICDE Francophone Project, supported by UNESCO, delivered two new OER capacity building courses targeting Francophone Africa
- The ICDE Secretary General was an invited speaker at the International Conference on *Promoting Lifelong Learning in Higher Education*, organized by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning and hosted by the Open University of Shanghai, China.
- Romina G. Kasman, representing the education sector of the UNESCO Multi-Country Office in San José (for Costa Rica, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Panama) was an invited keynote speaker at the ICDE World Conference in Costa Rica

## OPEN — PRAXIS

### ICDE's scholarly journal

Open Praxis is ICDE's peer-reviewed open access scholarly journal focusing on research and innovation in open, flexible and distance education. The aim of Open Praxis is to provide a platform for global collaboration and discussion of issues in the practice of our field.

In 2023, Anadolu University from Türkiye took over the hosting role from UNED, Spain and Editor Dr. Inés Gil-Jaurena. She was acknowledged in last year's annual report for her outstanding contribution to Open Praxis through more than a decade. A new editorial team led by Editor in Chief Prof. Aras Bozkurt took office in January 2023. They have mobilized reviewers and authors, secured continuous publication of articles and issues and improved the journal's online presence, especially through social media.

Open Praxis welcomes contributions demonstrating creative and innovative research, particularly emphasizing challenges, lessons, and achievements in the practice of open, online, and distance education worldwide, with a special focus on higher education and K-12. Articles may present research, surveys of recent work, original studies, or discussions on new technology and its broader implications.

To reflect its international scope, contributions are expected to be geographically and institutionally diverse and balanced.

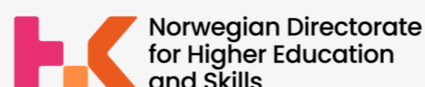
In 2023, four volumes of the journal were published. More information at [openpraxis.org](https://openpraxis.org)

### Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills

For 35 years, the Norwegian Government has provided ICDE with an annual grant to support its operations for the international development of open, flexible and distance learning. The Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills administers the grant ICDE receives annually on behalf of the Norwegian Government. The directorate is the executive agency for the Ministry of Education and Research within the higher education and higher vocational education sectors and is responsible for the national skills policy.

In line with the grant, ICDE bridges the connections between Norwegian institutions and the international community with expertise within online and flexible learning. ICDE has several active institutional members in Norway and welcomed the UiT, University of Tromsø, The Arctic University of Norway, as one of our new institutional members in 2023.

A part of the Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills' mandate is to "...strive to enhance knowledge and skills in the population, make lifelong high-quality education and learning accessible to all and ensure that the world of work has access to a competent workforce." The Directorate therefore naturally became a partner for the Lillehammer Lifelong Learning ICDE Conference in February 2023, together with the host; Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences. As the conference aimed to be an international meeting place between education, business, and the public sector, addressing lifelong learning through a variety of sub-themes on different levels, it became a natural space for furthering the collaboration between the Directorate and ICDE.



# ICDE Permanent Secretariat Staff in 2023



**Torunn Gjelsvik**  
Secretary General



**Anaïs Malbrand**  
Senior Adviser  
for Projects and  
Events



**Juliane Granly**  
Project and  
Development  
Manager



**Sophia Javaid**  
Senior Adviser for  
Membership and  
Communication



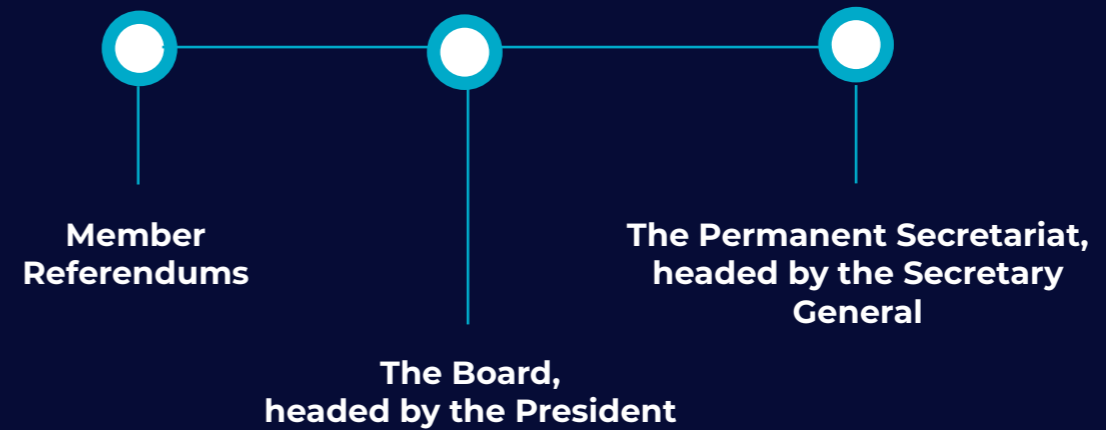
**Anna Fredriksen**  
Communication  
and Administration  
Adviser



**Laura Cortés Parra**  
Projects and Events  
Adviser  
*Temporary engagement,  
until October 2022*

# Organisation

ICDE is an independent, self-governing, non-profit and non-governmental legal entity. The association is governed by the following business bodies:



In addition, the Board is supported by the **Control Committee** and the **Nomination Committee**.

## ICDE Board 2023



**ICDE President: Neil Fassina**  
President, Okanagan College Canada



**Melinda Bandalaria**  
Chancellor, University of the Philippines  
Open University, Philippines



**Mark Nichols**  
Executive Director, Open Polytechnic,  
New Zealand



**Carlos Alberto P. de Oliveira**  
State University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil  
(Representing individual members)



**Som Naidu**  
Formerly representing University of the  
South Pacific, Fiji



**Ebba Ossiannilsson**  
Vice President Swedish Association for  
Open, Flexible and Distance Education,  
Sweden

### ICDE Control Committee 2023:

- Tian Belawati, Indonesia (Acting Chair)
- Santiago Acosta Aide, Ecuador
- Mette Villand, Norway
- Snorre Qveim-Leikanger, Attorney at Law, Norway

### ICDE Nomination Committee 2023:

- Asha Singh Kanwar, Canada (Chair)
- Mandla Stanley Makhanya, South Africa
- Torhild Slaatto, Norway





INTERNATIONAL  
COUNCIL FOR OPEN AND  
DISTANCE EDUCATION

International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE)

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