GUIDE Association continues to grow and expand through the successful international conferences on online and distance education's research and applications. The increasing number of universities joining the network and attending the Association's conferences, shows a growth of the interest towards innovative pedagogical models. Both traditional and open universities are improving their educational model through online education, expanding the access to their programs to adult, international and working students. Distance learning courses are becoming increasingly popular all over the world and used by companies as well as educational institutions to introduce a flexible learning method aimed to improve the qualifications of their employees and students.

The X International GUIDE Conference “Optimizing Higher Education for the Professional Student: A balance of flexibility, quality and cultural sensitivity”, will be held on September 16-18, 2015 at the University of Applied Sciences Technikum Wien (Vienna), Austria’s largest technical university of applied sciences that offers both traditional and distance degree programs.

The conference aims to promote discussion on improving higher education, bringing to light the needs of the evolving 21st century student and proposing new pedagogical strategies and technologies for meeting those needs. Particular attention will also be given to the continuing education and training of the working professional student, as well as the essential role of international collaboration and cultural sensitivity in the advancement of higher education research and technology.

The following main themes will be approached:

- The Evolution of the University Student
  - Researching the Impact of Social, Economic and Cultural Factors and Technological Trends
- Assuring Quality, Flexibility and Access in Distance Education
  - New Technologies for the Professional Student
- Career-Oriented Distance Education and Corporate Training
  - Bridging the Gap Between Theory and Application
- Connecting with the 21st Century Learner
  - Innovation in Pedagogy, Methodology and ICT to Meet the Needs of the Evolving Student
- European Citizenship and Beyond
  - Open and Distance Learning for National, International and European Collaboration and Research

The hosting institution, University of Applied Sciences Technikum Wien, with more than 8 000
graduates and almost 3,800 students, is Austria’s largest purely technical university of applied sciences. The educational offer consists of 12 bachelor’s and 17 master’s degree programs, which are offered as full-time, part-time and/or distance study programs. The educational programs are practice-oriented and based on a solid scientific foundation. Close ties and collaborations with business and industry give students and graduates excellent career opportunities. The combination of theory and practice is of central importance in both research and instruction. The research and development activities at UAS Technikum Wien have grown significantly in recent years and are currently concentrated on four research focuses: eHealth, Embedded Systems, Renewable Energy and Tissue Engineering. UAS Technikum Wien was founded in 1994 and in 2000 it became the first institution in Vienna to receive the status of a university of applied sciences. It became a member of the European University Association (EUA) in 2012 and is also a network partner of FEEI - Association of the Electrical and Electronics Industries.