

EUMEDCONNECT3 First Project Meeting 14 December 2011

Held at TAG Management College

Present:

Aouache El-MAOUHAB, CERIST/Algeria
Ayman BAHAA, EUN, Egypt
Maged KHAFAGY, MUST, Egypt
Imad Jussain AL-HUSSAINI Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Iraq
Yousef TORMAN, JUNet/ASREN, Jordan
Hisham Hajj HASSAN, CNRS, Lebanon
Dhiyab Salim AL ABRI, MOHE, Oman
Sa'di Mahmoud AWIENAT, Qatar Foundation, Qatar
Basam SHABAB, Qatar Foundation, Qatar
Mohammed EJAZZER, Qatar University, Qatar
Amjad ABUZAID MTIT Palestine
Hatem HAMAD IUG, Palestine
Ghassan SAFFARINI, An-Najah University, Palestine
Mohamed AWAD SudREN, Sudan
Mohamed Alfateh HASSOUNA, National Ribat University, Sudan
Mohamed JEMNI, CCK, Tunisia
Heithem ABBES, UTIC, Tunisia
Ahmed DABBAGH ANKABUT, UAE
Husam Sultan AL-ULAMA National Research Foundation,, UAE
Maha KORLTOM National Research Foundation, UAE
Sharifa HAJJAT, HCT-DWC, UAE
Salem AL-AGTASH, ASREN, Jordan
Sara ALEISAWI, ASREN, Jordan
Federico RUGGIERI, INFN, Italy
Federica TANLONGO GARR, Italy
Mario REALE, GARR, Italy
Serkan ORCAN, ULAKBIM, Turkey
Dawit BEKELE Internet Society
Reinhold POPPEK, Poppek Law Firm, Germany
Jonathon CHAPMAN Georgetown University/INTERNET2, USA
David WEST DANTE

Dr Talal Abu Ghazaleh as Chairman of ASREN welcomed everyone to the first EUMEDCONNECT3 meeting. He wished the meeting every success, building on the very successful outcomes of the e-AGE 2011 plenary meetings.

EUMEDCONNECT3 Project Manager's Report (EUM-11-048)

David West also welcomed everyone in his capacity as project manager at DANTE for EUMEDCONNECT3. This project follows on from previous phases which have established since 2004 a regional network for Arab countries around the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean with funding support from the European Commission. This third phase runs from September 2011 until 2014 with further funding support (36%) from the EC for beneficiary Arab countries in order to continue to develop the regional e-Infrastructure and transition it to ASREN. Initially NRENs of the following countries are participating in EUMEDCONNECT3 with EC funding support for their international connectivity for research and education to other partners, to GEANT (Pan-European R&E network) and via GEANT to INTERNET2:

Algeria – 155 Mbps
Morocco – 40 Mbps
Palestine – 45 Mbps

It is planned that the EUMEDCONNECT3 network will be further developed during 2012 working closely with ASREN and participation is encouraged by NRENs in the following categories:

- Partners of earlier EUMEDCONNECT phases (Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Tunisia) that wish to re-join.
- NRENs in other neighbouring beneficiary countries such as Lebanon and Libya
- NRENs in GCC countries interested to interconnect at the NREN's cost

The following criteria apply for joining EUMEDCONNECT3:

1. Established or forming Arab NRENs with government support
2. Providing national representation/access to EUMEDCONNECT3
3. Prepared to make financial contribution towards project costs
4. EC co-funding available for eligible countries, others welcome at own cost
5. Past DANTE invoices paid
6. ASREN membership strongly recommended

DANTE is already in discussion with partners in many of these countries. Others wishing to discuss connecting to EUMEDCONNECT3 should contact David West david.west@dante.net or ASREN representatives.

GEANT progress was presented during e-AGE 2011 by Niels Hersoug. A short additional presentation is provided on the website at EUM-11-049.

Partner Presentations

Presentations were given by:

- Existing EUMEDCONNECT3 partner representatives: Mme El Maouahab (Algeria), Amjad Abuzaid (Palestine) showed their NRENs had grown in recent years and how they had been supported by earlier EUMEDCONNECT phases.
 - In Algeria CERIST now has 110 institutions connected, 1Gb backbone between the main PoPs and 10 or 100Mbps access speeds for each university. Algeria has benefitted from participation in EUMEDCONNECT and EUMEDGRID projects. Algeria has confirmed its support for ASREN and is taking the administrative steps to complete joining.
 - In Palestine university now have 25 MBps access provided via PALTEL, half for EUMEDCONNECT connectivity and the remainder for other purposes. The long term wish is for a dark fibre network. Palestine has also benefitted greatly from the earlier EUMEDCONNECT projects and will initially connect at 45 Mbps in EUMEDCONNECT3.
- Other NREN representatives: Ayman Bahaa (Egypt), Yousef Torman (Jordan), Mohamed Jemni (Tunisia), Ahmed Dabbagh and Husam Sultan Al-Ulama (UAE), Dhiyab Salim Al Abri (Oman). These presentations focussed on current status and plans. Common themes were to find ways for cost effective interconnections, and to extend the network connectinos within the Arab region, and to focus on using the networks for research and other importnat applications such as digital libraries and environmental analysis.
 - In Jordan network capacities are now upgraded to 1.2Gbps access for all 11 universities connected, and there are plans to upgrade to 10 Gbps, the focus is on connecting additional, private universities and on re-joining EUMEDOCNNECT3 for international connectivity.

- In Tunisia, following the recent elections it is possible to consider re-joining EUMEDCONNECT3 and join ASREN and this will be discussed with the new minister of HE
- In Egypt, EUN has not yet joined EUMEDCONNECT3 due to utilisation levels and budget constraints, however Dr Bahaa regards joining EUMEDCONNECT3 and ASREN as strategically important. These will be discussed with the new Minister of HE
- Sharifa Hajjat of MTC (UAE) updated participants on use of technology to advance education in the Arab region and to encourage internet safety for children

ASREN status and plans

Salem Al-Agtash presented ASREN's key plans for developing and promoting pan-Arab e-Infrastructures. These include developing a service portfolio, supporting use of research and education networks, and developing financial sustainability in the future. He outlined ASREN's concept of a multi stakeholder consortium of key institutions to raise awareness and develop policies for longer term sustainability including establishing a charitable fund. The plan was for this to be led by ASREN with participation of the EC, INTERNET2, the World Bank and regional agencies. More details are provided elsewhere in the proceedings.

He also stressed the non-profit status and spirit of ASREN and the simple joining procedures for further partners to become stakeholders. Reinhold Poppek elaborated the joining procedure which requires only a certificated letter signed by a legal representative of the prospective stakeholder. No financial commitment for NRENs to join ASREN is required as under the Agreement TAG will allocated part of its initial stakeholding to additional approved NREN partners without charge. There was some discussion about the details including clarifying in the ASREN bylaws the types of additional members that would be permitted. ASREN agreed to incorporate this point in the next revision of the bylaws. Any partners wishing to discuss further should contact Salem Al Agtash: alagtash@ASRENOrg.net

EUMEDCONNECT3 Activity Report (EUM-11-050)

EUM-11-050 sets out the plans in the 4 main activity areas for EUMEDCONNECT3:

1. Network

This includes the development of the EUMEDCONNECT3 network, already started with the network tender, the new circuits for Algeria, Morocco and Palestine and network management by DANTE. The aim is to connect further countries in the next 12 months, including the possibility of a new PoP in Amman, and to prepare plans to transition network operations to ASREN.

In discussion the opportunity was suggested for ASREN to play a part in setting up and running neutral internet access points within the region. A first step could be collaborating with regional operators to make the case for NRENs and neutral network access points, the idea to be developed by ASREN, working with DANTE and interested EU NRENs
2. Applications Support and Promotion

This includes the e-AGE 2011 event which has been successfully held, and the new EUMEDCONNECT3 website (www.eumedconnect3.net) and marketing materials. The aim is for ASREN and DANTE to promote e-infrastructure usage including EU/Arab project collaboration and prepare case studies to demonstrate the benefits of e-infrastructure.
3. Capacity building and Training

This focusses on activities to directly increase NREN skills and knowledge. A survey of Arab NREN training needs and some early programmes to address these needs, are to be undertaken by ASREN with European NRENs and DANTE, with and for interested Arab NRENs. ASREN also plans to prepare a training portal.
4. Financial Sustainability

Work is underway to encourage further partners to join EUMEDCONNECT3 and ASREN to widen the NREN membership base and increase critical mass. The other key task is to secure additional revenue streams for long term viability. ASREN is leading on this through its initiative to create a multi-stakeholder consortium. In discussion it was suggested to prepare a White Paper on the benefits and opportunities of research and education networks for Arab countries. Ayman Bahaa offered to lead this, working with ASREN

Next Steps

It was agreed there would be 2 – 3 EUMEDCONNECT3/ASREN meetings per year, including one alongside e-AGE 2012, and monthly audioconferences to discuss progress and plans.

David West thanked all participants for their constructive participation. The meeting closed with lunch.