

NEW REPORT ON FUTURE OF EUROPEAN RESEARCH NETWORKING PUBLISHED

‘Knowledge without Borders: GÉANT 2020

as the European Communications Commons’ report presented to EU

Cambridge, UK, 5 October 2011 – The critical importance of research networking to European competitiveness and innovation, and how research networks such as GÉANT should evolve in the future are the basis of a major new report presented to the European Commission today.

The ‘Knowledge Without Borders: GÉANT 2020 as the European Communications Commons’ report has been written by the GÉANT Expert Group (GEG), an independent group of experts appointed by the European Commission. It provides a vision of how European research and education networks should look in 2020 and an action plan for achieving this vision.

For over a decade, the GÉANT research network has played a central role in European e-Infrastructure, enabling innovation by underpinning unrivalled collaboration across Europe and the world. Bridging digital and geographic divides, it provides 40 million researchers and students in 40 countries across Europe with the ability to work together and share massive volumes of data on projects as varied as radio-astronomy, drug research and the social sciences.

This success has been recognised by the European Union, with GEANT a key part of the Digital Agenda for Europe, one of the flagship initiatives driving Europe 2020.

However research is fundamentally changing and becoming ever-more data intensive and multi-disciplinary. Consequently the next decade will see a ‘data deluge’, with increasing information-sharing requirements across all academic disciplines on a global scale. The report observes that with the coming of the internet researchers can work anywhere, rather than needing to cluster around specific locations or physical centres. The infrastructure that puts Europe at the centre of scientific research is now the e-infrastructure.

“The power and scope of GÉANT ensure Europe remains a central hub for research and education, offering the best infrastructure to the brightest minds in the world,” said Neelie Kroes, European Commission Vice-President for the Digital Agenda. “Rich with these successes, GÉANT must now position itself to face the challenges of the next decade, which is why the Commission has asked a group of high-level experts to advise on future actions. I am certain that this report will be an invaluable input for formulating research, innovation and e-Infrastructure policies not only in the Commission but also in the Member States and GÉANT community.”

The vision outlined in the report sees GÉANT 2020 as the European communications commons, enabling talented people to collaborate with their peers around the world and to have instantaneous and unlimited access to any resource for knowledge creation, innovation and learning, unconstrained by the barriers of the pre-digital world.

Specifically, the goals that fulfil the GÉANT 2020 vision are:

1. Support knowledge communities by providing world-class connectivity and services.
2. Support the growth of these communities, in both breadth and depth within Europe, and opening up to talent beyond Europe's borders ;
3. Push the state-of-the-art of the communications commons by constant innovation and by translating this innovation into a competitive European ICT sector;
4. Reorganize to cope with the constantly changing environment.

“This independent report confirms the fundamental importance of GÉANT as the pan-European research and education e-infrastructure that enables ground breaking research, accelerating innovation and discovery by the smartest minds in Europe,” said Matthew Scott, Joint General Manager, DANTE, the organisation which on behalf of Europe's National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) has built and operates the GÉANT network. “We also recognise that research is undergoing a far reaching shift and GÉANT is committed to adapting to meet these major new challenges. We thank the European Commission for their support over the past decade which has been instrumental in ensuring European researchers are provided with the most advanced network services needed to keep them at the forefront of scientific discovery and collaboration, and look forward to their continued support to ensure Europe remains competitive and continues to secure its position as a world leader in research excellence.”

“This major new report sets out an innovative vision for research networking across Europe,” said Ivan Maric, GÉANT Executive Committee Chair and President of the Management Board at CARnet, the Croatian NREN. “We welcome these recommendations, particularly the emphasis on greater decision-making by NRENS, which we look forward to working with our colleagues across Europe to implement.”

In preparing the report the GEG has taken input from a variety of sources including interviews with over 25 experts operating in the research networking and related fields, as well as input from official policy documents, NREN reports and GÉANT deliverables. The full report is available for download from:

<http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ict/e-infrastructure/docs/geg-report.pdf>.

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About GÉANT

GÉANT is the high speed European communication network dedicated to research and education. In combination with its NREN partners, GÉANT creates a secure, high-speed research infrastructure that serves 40 million researchers in over 8,000 institutions across 40 European countries. Operating at speeds of up to 40 Gbps, GÉANT is the world's largest and most advanced multi-gigabit network dedicated to research and education. Building on the success of its predecessors, GÉANT has been created around the needs of users, providing flexible, end-to-end services that transform the way that researchers collaborate. GÉANT is at the heart of global research networking through wide ranging connections with other world regions, underpinning vital projects that bridge the digital divide and benefit society as a whole.

Co-funded by the European Commission under the EU's 7th Research and Development Framework Programme, GÉANT is the e-Infrastructure at the heart of the EU's European Research Area and contributes to the development of emerging Internet technologies. The project partners are 32 European National Research and Education Networks (NRENs), TERENA and DANTE. GÉANT is operated by DANTE on behalf of Europe's NRENs. For more information, visit www.geant.net