



**TERENA Task Force on the Management of Service Portfolios (TF-MSP)
Tuesday 3rd & Wednesday 4th February 2009
TERENA Offices, Amsterdam, the Netherlands**

Minutes by John DYER
TERENA

1. Introductions

The meeting started with the usual formalities in which attendees introduced themselves. Due to the inclement weather some intending participants were unable to be at the meeting in person but were able to join by video conference.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting and Actions

There were no comments on the minutes of the last meeting 29/30 September 2008 which were accepted without change. The updated status and outcome of the open actions from previous meetings were discussed and are shown in the table at the end of this document.

Laura Durnford of TERENA provided a brief summary of the Media Management and Distribution Workshop that took place in January 2009. The workshop had been well attended by NREN and Campus staff and heard about: four media handling systems; federation and repository issues. There was agreement that the main challenge is the need to work on standard solutions. These should encompass: the collection and coordination of the best open source tools; workflow processes; metadata; copyright and legal issues.

Alberto suggested that it would be interesting to have a small survey of issues such as AUPs etc.

3. RedIRIS Five Year Strategic Plan – Alberto Pérez Gómez

RedIRIS provides its services to more than 350 Institutions (including all Spanish Universities and most public research centres and ICTSs). This includes more than 150,000 researchers and over 2 million potential end users.

Alberto explained that there had recently been a government election in Spain and the new party in power are very supportive to RedIRIS. They have given sufficient funds over the next 10 years to provide a dark-fibre network over that period which is an integral part of the RedIRIS 5 year strategic. He went on to explain the planning difficulty arising from Spain having 17 regional governments each with their own local knowledge society aspirations.

As part of the strategic planning process, RedIRIS has used a number of standard business tools such as: SWOT, PESTL & Porter Five Forces. The analysis had identified a number key areas in which RedIRIS will focus. One issue is the need to demonstrate the need for over-provision as a way of providing good QoS, even to small groups of users. The main focus of RedIRIS Nova will be the ability of RedIRIS to provide increased capacity and reliability at reduced cost.

4. HEAnet Five Year Strategic Plan – Brian Boyle

Brian Boyle introduced the HEAnet five year strategy which is entitled “Lighting the Future”. HEAnet has undertaken extensive stakeholder consultation and used the information gathered as inputs to standard business tools such as SWOT and competence analysis. Brian explained how HEAnet looked at their own previous strategy covering the period 2002-2007 to determine what had been achieved and what had been less successful. In addition HEAnet consulted several external sources such as the Irish Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation 2006 – 2013 and the strategies of other NRENs.

The HEAnet core plan is based on five strategic pillars: Network Excellence; Customer Alignment; Competence & Capability; Innovation & Collaboration; Service Excellence. All of these components have clearly identified success indicators underpinned by robust SLAs.

HEAnet are now working on the next steps which include: Regular meetings with clients; total involvement of HEAnet staff; workshops; meeting cooperate objectives; departmental objectives and individuals’ objectives.

5. Subcontracting Services, Experiences of SUNET - Hans Wallberg

Hans Wallberg explained that SUNET provides universities with high class national and international connectivity and network services. The key features are high throughput and reliability resulting from over-provision of bandwidth and redundancy. This means that users do not experience bottlenecks on the SUNET network. SUNET is quite unique as a European NREN in that SUNET does not employ any personnel. SUNET buys services from universities and other organisations. SUNET is administered by the Swedish Research Council and managed by a Board with representatives from the universities assisted by a technical reference group. The origin of this organisational choice seems largely based on Swedish cultural expectations rooted in the past.

Basic operational services (network operations, DNS, IRT ...) are subcontracted to NORDUnet A/S in Denmark. Other services are subcontracted to universities (CERT, Archive - University of Uppsala; SUNET e-Meeting Service - Technical University of Luleå). Hans reported that it is hard to undertake development when you don't have any staff; however progress is being made in the middleware area by SWAMI - Swedish Alliance for Middleware Infrastructure. SWAMI is the organisation for middleware cooperation in the Swedish higher education community with membership being made up of 14 institutions and universities, including SUNET.

Hans concluded that the arrangement works very well in the Swedish university environment. He also pointed out that they have not tried anything else. The positive features of SUNET are that it is very cost effective as it does not have the overheads associated with having its own staff. There is not a need for extensive internal reporting and SUNET can act quickly on some aspects of operations (terminating services for instance). On the negative side, the amount of innovation that takes place is low as it is slow and difficult.

6. Introduction to GN3 Partner Services Promotion – Laura Durnford

Partner Services Promotion (PSP) is part of the GN3 project networking activity NA2 which will undertake Joint Dissemination and Outreach. PSP will be led by TERENA. If all goes to plan it is expected to start on 1 April 2009. Whilst recognising need for developing multi-domain user services, PSP will engage in dialogue with NRENs to encourage consistent roll out of advanced services. PSP aims to provide tools, materials & assistance to help in the dissemination of information about the services and support training. The whole process is intended to improve internal communications between GN3 participants and bring with it a sense of ownership.

Several meeting attendees applauded this initiative reporting that few people without direct involvement in the GN2 services had ever heard of them. It was suggested that someone produces a set of background slides on GN3 that NRENs can use to disseminate information about the network and services to their clients.

The GN3 services that will be targeted include: eduGAIN; eduPERT; perfSONAR; eduroam and AutoBAHN, plus other services that NRENs might be offered by DANTE. It was also pointed out that a slide set should be kept up-to-date and be easily accessible.

7. GRNET Service Box - Yannis Mitsos

GRNET has developed a "Service Box" with a set of pre-installed network services to meet the needs of academic institutes. It is based on a 1U hardware platform running Debian Linux with a portfolio of: Directory; AAI; VPN; VOIP and network debugging tools. The box has been deployed at more than 20 institutions over the past 4 years.

The motivation for creating such a tool was to reduce the technical input required from the institutions and provide some centralized synchronization. The web-based user interface does allow some local configuration. The availability of the box and services supports the deployment of advanced novel services such as Shibboleth.

The deployment of the boxes has enabled GRNET to get a better understanding of the institutions needs, allowed new services to be rolled out quickly and helped with ensuring a uniformity of services across the institutions. A side effect has been to help building a community spirit between the local network administrators.

John Dyer remarked that this sort of deployment could be particularly useful in helping developing NRENs build communities.

Walter van Dijk of SURFnet explained that since operation of the boxes requires an IP addresses in the local institutions IP address space they would not be allowed to be used in the Netherlands. Dutch law requires the CPE to be under providers control and hence have an IP address in the providers domain.

8. GRNET Simple Storage – Yannis Mitsos

GRNET Simple Storage (GSS) provides free storage, initially limited to 10 Gbytes per person for members of the Greek research & academic community. GSS is similar to the Amazon Simple Storage Service (Amazon S3) but offers more functionality. GSS users are also able to share their files with selected other users, or defined user groups. The architecture is based on approximately 140 Tbytes of SATA disks in a storage area network on a server farm with the application layer functionality implemented in Java.

The GSS is protected by Shibboleth Authentication and Authorisation and in part is being used as a driver to promote the adoption of AAI services in the institutions.

FUNET say they are also implementing something similar in partnership with the storage work being undertaken in TERENA in TF-Storage.

9. The Role of the NREN based on activities in Funet - Harri Kuusisto

The Finnish NREN, Funet has been in existence for 25 years. It currently employs around 15 people and serves 84 institutions including all universities, polytechnics and most public research institutes. Whilst most of the services are operated by Funet, some new services are outsourced.

In addition to its service provision role, Funet works on branding and marketing of services, particularly at the beginning of the service life-cycle. Funet often acts as a central organisation for collective procurement, advocacy and negotiation for their constituency. Harri explained that a major benefit is that out of this collaboration and cooperation with its institutions Funet has been able to build a real sense of community.

10. Customer Segmentation – Koen Schelkens & TERENA Compendium of European NRENs – John Dyer

The question of the customer segmentation questionnaire and the TERENA Compendium of European NRENs were so related and intertwined that the discussions on each became one agenda item.

Koen Schelkens of BELNET presented a questionnaire he had developed for TF-MSP on "Customer Categories". The background to the development of such a questionnaire is that many NRENs are now serving a broader community than when they started out 20 years ago. Some of the more recently connected sites contain "atypical users" compared with those of the initially connected community.

The questionnaire sets out to explore the differentiation in: pricing; service levels; range of services offered; connection policy between the different types of users/clients/customers. It also tries to ascertain what influence each of the groups can have on the decision making process of the NREN.

John Dyer who is managing the 2009 TERENA compendium of European NRENs project pointed out that the customer questionnaire being discussed in TF-MSP has a large overlap with similar questions in previous Compendium questionnaires.

Sabine Jaume complained about the length of the Compendium questionnaire and explained that RENATER cannot provide accurate answers on the number of connected institutions. The difficulty arises from the interpretation of "a connected institution". She went on to explain that Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS) is one institution, but it has over 300 sites. Hans Wallberg noted that SUNET provides dual connectivity for all Swedish universities. Should he report the aggregate bandwidth or the bandwidth of a single link? There were further questions. Walter van Dijk asked: "what is the business case for NRENs investing considerable time and effort in completing the Compendium questionnaire?"

Alberto's opinion was that the TERENA compendium was a unique piece of work and provides

information that is useful in the task of planning and generating funding for an NREN. Whilst the collection of exact numbers may be difficult for the reasons mentioned before, it is good to have a rough indication of numbers.

Alberto went on to say that in his opinion the Compendium does not give complete picture of customer segmentation and he would like to see more information collected in this respect.

Walter van Dijk suggested that before asking such questions there should be a better understanding of what we are trying to ascertain and why. He suggested a range of questions that we should consider:

- Why do you need a new particular customer segment?
- What is the motivation for connecting this group?
- How will they be connected (directly, indirectly...)?
- What are the use policies for these users?
 - Are they to be provided with a full range of services?
 - Some NRENs differentiate, others do not.

It was pointed out that NRENs generally have a poor understanding of some user group requirements, even when these users are part of the traditional NREN constituency. Specific examples of this include the needs of artists, social scientist, humanities, music etc. When these user groups were explored as part of the EARNEST study in 2006/7 it became abundantly clear the even making contact with such groups to understand their needs and aspirations is incredibly hard at the national or international level apart from in some high-profile cases.

It was agreed that TF-MSP should dedicate its next meeting exclusively to the exploration of these issues. Some user areas were identified during the meeting. Some TF-MSP members agreed to provide some presentations and John Dyer agreed to try and contact speakers for other areas.

Members of TF-MSP are asked to think of other user groups/examples that can be discussed.

User Group Area	Speaker
Hospitals	JD to identify
Broadcasting Companies	Walter van Dijk
Museums	JD to identify
Music and Dance	JD to identify
Administration	Koen Schelkens
Highlights of EARNEST study	Sabine Jaume

John Dyer agreed to make a poll of TF-MSP members to select a date for the meeting around the mid-April 2009 time-frame.

11. The New HD videoconferencing service at SURFnet – Walter van Dijk

At the time of the TF-MSP meeting, SURFnet was in the latter stages of introduction of a new High-Definition Video Conference service to its community. The planned launch date being 1 March 2009. The service has been in pre-production use for the month of February 2009.

Walter provided a technical overview of the system which can be seen in his presentation slides (available online via the TF-MSP web pages). He explained that the introduction of the service

had been prompted by user demand originating from five Dutch University Medical Centres (UMCs). There had additionally been some synergies with some regional cancer centres. The UMCs were willing to commit to subscribing to the new HD service for a period three years initially which enabled SURFnet to get the service off the ground. In return for this subscription the UMCs get: 10 permanent conference rooms on the MCU, ad-hoc rooms, recording of sessions, streaming of session, support and monthly reporting.

Stimulation of uptake in the universities and polytechnics was achieved by a competition in which applicant institutions were able to receive a substantial contribution to their equipment installation budget provided they comply with the conditions of the service. From the 150 or so SURFnet institutions, 25 compliant project proposals were received and funded which has led to a critical mass of user institutions being achieved. It is hoped that this will lead to further significant uptake during 2009 and hence a reduction in tariffs.

Walter explained that the project had clearly demonstrated that local HDVC sets have become affordable and institutions are ready and able to install them and benefit from the improved level of service. He added that he hoped other European NRENs would follow SURFnet's lead and install HD systems so that international HD collaboration could take place. Brian Boyle remarked that Ireland had installed HDVC for their medical community and he would try and ensure contact between the Irish and Dutch groups.

Laura asked if lecturers would be using the service to record lectures for later playback. Walter said that in the Netherlands such facilities are provided commercially by at least 3 companies and lecturers prefer to use those systems as they allow editing etc.

12. GÉANT Partner Relations – John Chevers

John Chevers of DANTE explained that different NRENs are different in many ways in terms of size; service portfolios; markets and funding etc. DANTE has historically limited itself to the provision of IP services. More recently DANTE has expanded its offering with hybrid networking and more recently other services. John explained that in GN3, there is a desire to develop a more joined up approach to the provision of services. This has led to the development of the networking activity NA4 Liaison and Support activity

John has written some documentation in this regard and will send to the TF-MSP email distribution list.

13. Update on Mail Quality Improvement ideas

Alberto was very keen to progress the idea of a meeting/workshop to discuss the topic of improving the quality of email. He suggested that it should not impinge on the customer segmentation meeting, but should be held later in the year, possibly late June/early July.

The list of possible interested parties includes: RedIRIS, SURFnet; UNINETT; BELNET; GARR; GRNET; JANET.

14. Date of Next Meetings

The next meeting of TF-MSP will take place in mid-April 2009 and will be dedicated to the discussion of customer segmentation issues.

TF-MSP will also meet jointly with TF-PR on the morning Monday 8 June, just before TNC 2009 in Malaga.

15. Action List

Reference	Who	Action	Status
20080929-01	JD	Update deliverables list and post on TF-MSP list and web page	DONE – LINK now in shortcuts on TF-MSP homepage
20080929-03	AP	Work with JD on monthly topic	ONGOING Task
20080929-04	KS	Develop a questionnaire for NRENs on Customer Segmentation	DONE – presented at Feb 2009 meeting
20090203-01	AP	Small Survey of Issues such as AUPs etc.	NEW
20090203-02	LD	Feedback to DANTE the recommendation on slides on GN3 network and services to DANTE	NEW
20090203-03	JD	Arrange speakers for next TF-MSP meeting on Customer Segmentation	NEW
20090203-04	All	Provide feedback to JD on additional example of new user groups	NEW
20090203-05	JC	Send Partner Relations document to TF-MSP	NEW

16. List of Participants

Lajos	Balint	NIIF/HUNGARNET	
Brian	Boyle	HEAnet	
Domen	Božeglav	ARNES	remote
John	Chevers	DANTE	
Tomi	Dolenc	ARNES	remote
Laura	Durnford	TERENA	
John	Dyer	TERENA	
Sabine	Jaume-Rajaonia	RENATER	
Harri	Kuusisto	FUNNET/CSC	
Yannis	Mitsos	GRNET	
Alberto	Perez	RedIRIS	
Koen	Schelkens	BELNET	
Maurice	van den Akker	SURFnet	
Walter	van Dijk	SURFnet	
Hans	Wallberg	SUNET	
Shirley	Wood	JANET(UK)	remote

Apologies

Gerti	Foest	DFN
Ann	Harding	SWITCH
Otto	Kreiter	DANTE
Magnus	Strømdal	UNINETT
Dorte	Olesen	UNI.C