

LIFECYCLE AND PORTFOLIO MANAGEMENT GROUP (LCPM) MAKES PLANS TO FORM A TERENA TASK FORCE

Nineteen members of the LCPM initiative from European research and education networks (NRENS) met in Amsterdam on 23 November, both to present and discuss ongoing LCPM activities and to finalise plans to present the Terms of Reference for the creation of a proposed new task force, TF-LCPM, to the TERENA Executive Committee during their upcoming meeting in mid-December.

LCPM addresses the introduction of new services within NRENs and the discontinuation of existing services, the alignment of their service portfolios with customer requirements; the marketing of services within NREN service portfolios and methods for defining the lifecycle stage of a particular service.

Ann Harding of HEAnet provided an overview of the proposed work item to compare the current Service Level Agreements (SLAs) of NRENs. She pointed out that there are two categories of SLAs: those with the NRENs own service provider (the commercial network operators or DANTE), and those that the NREN provides to its own users/clients. It was agreed that the initiative would initially concentrate on the second type; the SLAs that the NREN has with its users/clients.

Urs Eppenberger of SWITCH explained that the scope of service portfolios can be rather larger than expected for instance, Sektornet in Denmark offers around fifty services to schools. The main motivation for comparing and sharing information on service portfolios is to take advantage of any synergies that can be found. These synergies could include learning from each other (sharing ideas for new services), collaborative development and/or operation of the services (joint procurement, co-management) and synchronised launch and shut-down of services (PR synergies).

Information collection will be organised through the polling NRENs, searching NREN websites or by asking for additional LCPM-related questions in the TERENA Compendium questionnaire. Information dissemination can be achieved through the use of wikis, RSS feeds and LCPM web pages

Magnus Strømdal of UNINETT explained that the motivations for exchanging ideas of delivering services are: to catch new developments, technology and customer requirements at the right time; to save costs and also to attempt to overcome the "not invented here" syndrome.

Magnus went on to explain the UNINETT measuring point initiative that will provide a comprehensive measurement infrastructure for their network. Performance can be measured between any two campuses on the UNINETT network reporting on parameters including: one-way delay and packet loss; available bandwidth and variation of delay over distance. The initiative will allow UNINETT to have a detailed picture and allow them to understand the effects of introducing new technologies such as telephone services over the Internet (Voice over IP).

The UNINETT *measuring point initiative* is an idea that could be adopted by other NRENs and is an example of a technology that could be shared more easily should a mechanism be put in place to exchange ideas. There are opportunities for the exchange of information and for collaboration in the development of new services and identification of new user/client requirements.

Walter van Dijk of SURFnet explained that LCPM decision-making models and tools should be based on business modelling, not on NREN funding models. Funding models are already reported in the TERENA Compendium. He expressed his hope that this LCPM activity would enable NRENs to learn from one another on topics such as: Acceptable Use Policies; Customer Segmentation and Tariff Models.

The proposed activities on this subject include documenting best practices for LCPM models within European NRENs and developing an “off-the-shelf” model for LCPM processes within an NREN. The target should be to share experience, knowledge and best current practice in order to assist other NRENs in making progress.

In considering the business models for NREN services, it is also important to consider the “last mile”, typically the responsibility of the campus. Without complete end-to-end connectivity of the appropriate type, users may not be able to access the desired services.

It was noted that the nature of the organisational structure and the level of services delivered both have an impact on the tariff models adopted. Some NRENs provide a comprehensive package of value added services as part of the basic offering to users/clients, whilst others deliver connectivity.

National funding policy and competition from commercial Internet Service Providers (ISPs) will also have an impact on tariff models. In some countries, academic and research users/clients are free to buy connectivity from wherever they wish. Now that ISPs are capable of delivering similar levels of basic connectivity as that offered by NRENs (specifically Gigabit Ethernet) it is vitally important that NRENs differentiate themselves sufficiently well, making clear those additional services that commercial ISPs cannot deliver.

The participants identified four areas of activities to be included in the Terms of Reference for the proposed task force:

1/ Analysis and comparison of the service portfolios of participating NRENs. Some services might be jointly procured or co-managed as a result. It will include a list of service-types and categories, a collection of the portfolios of the NRENs and structure for presenting them and a comparison of service level agreements;

2/ Comparison of service level agreements, identifying the NRENs that have SLAs and developing best practices for a NREN SLAs;

3/ Exchange of ideas on delivering services in order to translate rising technologies into new services and to translate new customer requirements into new services;

4/ Development of LCPM decision-making models and tools including the exchange of concepts for lifecycle management of services, exchange of concepts for portfolio management and the development of best practices for lifecycle and portfolio management.

BoF (Birds of a Feather) meetings were held during the TERENA Networking Conferences in 2004 and 2005 and at the NORDUnet Conference in April of 2005. The group also held a workshop in Lyngby, Denmark in March in conjunction with a TF-PR meeting. It is evident that there is an increasing need among the NRENs to address the issue of the service portfolios they offer and that there is interest among the NRENs to share their expertise and experiences. Presentations on LCPM made in a dedicated session on “What Services NRENs Need to Provide” at the TERENA Networking Conference 2006.

www.terena.nl/conferences/tnc2005/programme/sessions/show.php?sess_id=106

More information about the activities of the LCPM group at TERENA, including the presentations from the workshop can be found at:

<http://www.terena.nl/lcpm/>

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