

Amsterdam, 22 February 2005

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TERENA HOLDS WORKSHOP ON CONNECTING SCHOOLS TO NATIONAL RESEARCH AND EDUCATION NETWORKS

The eEurope 2002 Action Plan, which was adopted by the European Council in June 2000, already stated that a very high-speed trans-European network for electronic scientific communications should link research institutions and universities, as well as scientific libraries, scientific centres and, progressively, schools. This appeal to connect schools to research and education networks has led to actions in some EU member states, but not in others. Some national governments had already taken (possibly different) initiatives earlier, and in other countries the time was apparently not ripe yet. The issue of connecting schools to national research and education networks was investigated by TERENA in 2003 in the SERENATE studies.

The SERENATE Summary Report concluded that some governments had initiated projects to connect schools, libraries, museums or other public institutions to their national research network, while others had not; some governments had taken initiatives to connect these kinds of institutions but preferred not to involve the National Research and Education Network (NREN) organisation. These choices were seen to be within the remit of national authorities.



During the year 2004, a new interest in connecting schools arose among the European research and education networking community. Following requests from its membership, TERENA organised a workshop on “Connecting Schools to National Research and Education Networks”, which took place on 22 February 2005 in Amsterdam. The workshop was attended by 40 persons, who represented 19 different NRENs as well as some policy and funding organisations and equipment vendors. They heard presentations about current initiatives to connect schools in the United Kingdom (Robert Symberlist, UKERNA), Portugal (Lino Santos, FCCN), Slovenia

(Tomi Dolenc, ARNES), Norway (Petter Kongshaug, UNINETT), Greece (Dimitrios Kalogeras, GRNET), Italy (Gabriella Paolini, GARR), Ireland (Andrew Byrne, HEAnet) and Denmark (Per Thorbøll, UNI·C).

It became clear from the discussions that user requirements are largely common across the countries represented; however, the financial and political situations vary significantly. There are many common issues and needs, but the solutions always require a number of choices that are very much dependent upon the local political, technical and organisational environment. As a consequence, there is only very limited scope for NRENs to work together on developing technologies and services related to connecting schools. However, there is a substantial interest in exchanging information, so that NRENs can learn from each other's experiences.

The TERENA Secretariat will provide a number of services to facilitate this information exchange. These include: a mailing list to discuss common issues, enabling participants to ask for advice on specific problems; a dedicated area on the TERENA website with information from different sources; a list of open issues and frequently asked questions; and an extract from the TERENA Compendium on NRENs in Europe providing information on the current status of connecting schools.

Further information, including the presentations from the workshop, can be found at:

<http://www.terena.nl/schools.html>

To subscribe to the discussion list, send an email to majordomo@terena.nl, with "subscribe schoolnet" in the text.

KV/0205



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