Report on the TERENA Technical Advisory Council
Catania, Italy
Monday 15 May 2006

Notes by: John DYER
TERENA

21 June 2006

Introduction

The 2006 Technical Advisory Council (TAC) met at "Le Ciminiere", Catania, Italy on Monday 15 May. The meeting was attended by 44 delegates representing 24 organisations in 20 countries.

Claudio welcomed the members and explained the goals of the TAC for those that had not attended before. In summary the main tasks of the TAC are to provide strategic directions for the TERENA technical activities, discuss issues that are important for all NRENs and consider the focus of the Special Interest Areas (SIAs). The council meeting this year took the form of a number of presentations and discussions.

TERENA Server Certificate Service – John Dyer, TERENA

John Dyer of TERENA made a presentation on the Server Certificate Service (SCS) which is operational and serving eight subscribing NRENs. He explained the "pop-up-problem" and the need move away from self-signed certificates, the reason being that users seldom, if ever check the fingerprint. In summary the SCS permits the member NRENs to obtain an unlimited numbers of server certificates with 1, 2 or 3 years validity. End-user certificates are not available from the SCS.

Hans Döbbeling of DANTE raised the question of whether or not DANTE could join SCS and issue certificates for their servers which are located around Europe. Licia answered that this is not possible under the terms of the current contract with GlobalSign. Licia went on to explain that if UKERNA were part of the SCS project, then they could issue certificates to DANTE for their servers. The important criteria that must be proven are: the legal existence of the organisation making the request for the certificate; that they are a customer of the RA and the ownership of the server domain name. Geographic location is not relevant in the context of issuing the certificate.

In further discussion the issue of the legal liability for material and hyperlinks was raised in the context of servers certified using SCS certificates. It was agreed that the SCS certificate only demonstrates that the certificate is strongly bound to the server and it signifies nothing about the legal nature of the content.

A show of hands indicated that around five further NRENs are interested in joining the SCS project during the first year with another indicating they would join after the first phase.

Supporting pan-European Video Conferencing Services

Victor Reijs of HEAnet asked the TAC members for their opinions on whether or not they thought there is a needed for the development of a pan-European Video Conferencing Service. Victor mentioned the document "Recommendations on real-time group communication and collaboration services in support of international projects" that was produced for TERENA by SURFnet staff. www.terena.nl/publications/files/videoconf-reccomendations-dec2005.pdf

Victor reported that a proposal to create a new GN2 Service Activity had been sent to the GN2 Executive Committee by a small group of NRENs. Although the proposal had been viewed positively by the Executive Committee, it had subsequently been withdrawn due to lack of manpower. The issue is, what, if anything should be put in place to support users right now. Victor expressed his view that a pan-European coordination service is necessary and that it should start with an H.323 based system since many elements are already in place and working well with reasonably good quality. Victor suggested that a pan-European video conferencing service should be like any other application and should not require pre-booking. Users should be able to connect whenever they like.

Andrew Cormack of UKERNA suggested that if an on-demand system without prior reservation required is to work effectively, then it has to be supported with auto cascading and fall-back. Robert Symberlist reported that there is extensive use of advance bookings of resources in the UK schools sector video conferencing systems. The reason for this is the need to schedule lessons and be sure the necessary resources are available. Robert went on to explain that the demand for pan-European video conference is huge and is frequently satisfied by ad-hoc solutions purchased in isolation from a local ISP. This can lead to poor interoperability, low quality and wasting of resources. It was generally agreed that addressing this issue would be of benefit for the education and research sector.

In terms of the technology, there are several possibilities including: H.323; VRVS; AccessGrid; Skype and MSN-chat that are in use and could be adopted. It was agreed that there is sufficient technology available, what is missing is the coordination, and peripheral issues like room set-up assistance. Dimitrios Kalogeras of GRNET mentioned that their MCUs provide some signalling into the network to ensure the provision of good connectivity out to the borders of the Greek national network. He also reported that they lack campus tools to help administrators detect Quality of Service problems.

Mike Norris of HEAnet, Ireland voiced his support for a coordination initiative in which the TERENA community experts provide some leadership. He thought it important not to be held back by legacy systems, but to move ahead. Mauro Campanella of GARR, Italy said he has issues with H.323. Mike also applauded Hungarnet of making their MCUs available to the whole European community and called for more similar initiatives.

Egon Verharen of SURFnet, the Netherlands explained that he thinks that all the technical resources that are needed for a pan-European video conference service are in place. Indeed there are support staff in the NRENs and contact information is publicly available from TERENA www.terena.nl/activities/tf-vvc/F/vc-services-jan2006.html. The development of a pan-European video conference requires some

formalisation of the contacts. He suggested that all NRENs work on making their services very professional and to market them in their communities. In passing Egon mentioned that SURFnet now prefers to recommend personal video conferencing tools (like VRVS and Breeze) rather than room based solutions.

Klaas Wierenga of SURFnet suggested that the community should identify where we want to be in five years time with this service, an approach successfully adopted by TF-MOBILITY in the context of eduroam.

In closing the discussion, Egon reported that the TF-VVC will end its current mandate in September this year. He explained that any follow-on activity should be more tightly focussed.

Connecting Schools - Robert Symberlist, UKERNA, UK

Robert provided an overview of the connection of schools in the UK, reporting that 100% of UK secondary schools with potentially 18 million users are connected at 8 Mbps. The main technical areas of interest to the schools are: Video conferencing; content and AAI.

UKERNA is currently engaged in Phase 2 of the UK Videoconferencing Services Project to pilot national-scale videoconferencing between schools' networks via the JANET Interconnects. As part of the pilot, UKERNA provides IP/ISDN gateways to facilitate the connection of galleries and museums, many of which are still using ISDN. Robert went on to provide numerous examples of the material and content provided by some of the galleries and museums. UKERNA also provides support to the schools community through quality assurance of content and a "Video Technology Advisory Service". Links to this information can be found on the JANET website: http://www.jvcs.ja.net/schools/

Some of the challenges involved in developing the service include: automated checking of connections; billing for ISDN services and the integration of Shibboleth and Edubase. Collaboration services are provided to enable schools to find other institutions that might have similar ideas. In addition content providers can advertise their products and services. Collaboration services such as these could be useful Europe-wide.

The European Videoconferencing in Schools Initiative (VISIT) is a TERENA initiative proposed by UKERNA and ARNES and endorsed at the 2nd TERENA Schools Workshop on 25 October 2005. The initiative which started on 1 January 2006 aims to share best practice and enable interoperability between schools in all countries. The VISIT partners are still looking for other countries to actively participate in the initiative. Organisations such as NRENs, funders of schools, museums, galleries and trainers are welcome.

Email Whitelisting- Andrew Cormack, UKERNA, UK

The idea of whitelisting was raised at the TERENA TF-CSIRT meeting in Jan 2006. Andrew Cormack now raised the issue with the TAC members to understand the level of interest in the community in general.

Andrew explained the filtering possibilities including: at the institutional level; on content; on IP source address and on history. The use of history, known as blacklisting is based on filtering out mail from sites with a known record of sending out high proportions of spam. An alternative approach is to always accept mail from sites that send out high proportions of good/wanted messages – this is known as whitelisting. Andrew suggested that the whitelists could be managed nationally by the NREN CSIRTs. The CSIRTs would agree the criteria for being on the whitelist. Institutions would then apply to the CSIRT and ask to be on the whitelist, agreeing to abide by the rules. If European CSIRTs could agree a common policy, it might be possible practical and indeed desirable to exchange whitelists.

Andrew mentioned a draft proposal on NREN Whitelisting Exchange which has been circulated to the TAC email distribution list and eCOAT. What still remains to be done is to draft a standard policy and work on how to exchange lists on a European level. It was agreed that TERENA could provide a repository for this type of information and pointers to whitelist servers.

TERENA Task Force on Life Cycle and Portfolio Management
Urs Eppenberger, SWITCH, CH

Urs Eppenberger explained that background and motivation for creating the TERENA Task Force on Life Cycle and Portfolio Management (TF-LCPM). Urs pointed out that TF-LCPM is not a technical task force under the auspices of the TERENA Technical Programme, but it is important for NREN staff to understand the non-technical business factors that effect the introduction, support and withdrawal of services and products. TF-LCPM is exploring how these models can be applied to NREN services and products. He encouraged TAC members to attend the LCPM BoF session later in the week and to become actively involved in the work of the task force.

Review of TERENA Technical Programme Special Interest Areas
Claudio Allocchio, TERENA VP Technical Programme

Claudio presented the list of SIAs that was agreed two years ago. After some discussion it was agreed that no changes should be made and this list will remain unchanged:

- GRID, Campus and E2E coordination across all SIAs
- Lower Layers (to include: IPv6, Multicast, VPNs, MPLS, QoS, Performance Monitoring & Optical Technology)
- Voice & Video Collaboration (to include content delivery)
- Middleware (providing cross-SIA support)
- Security (providing cross-SIA support)
- Mobility

Attendees at the 2006 TAC
"Le Ciminiere", Catania, Italy

Monday 15 May 2006

Claudio Allocchio	GARR and TERENA
Andrea Baldi	ESA
Lajos Balint	NIIF/Hungarnet
Martin Bech	UNI-C
Mauro Campanella	GARR
Michael Caruana	University of Malta
Gilbert Cassar	University of Malta
Valentino Cavalli	TERENA
Andrew Cormack	UKERNA
Hans Döbbeling	DANTE
John DYER	TERENA
Jon Ingi Einarsson	RHnet
Urs Eppenberger	SWITCH
Lars Fischer	NORDUnet
Licia Florio	TERENA
David Foster	CERN
Jean-Paul Gautier	CNRS/UREC
Jan Gruntorad	CESNET
Torgny Hallenmark	SUNET
Saethor Jonsson	RHnet
Dimitrios Kalogeras	GRNET
Baiba Kaškina	LATNET
Peter Kaufmann	DFN
Olav Kvittem	UNINETT
Mikael Linden	CSC, the Finnish IT Center for Science
Diego Lopez	REDIRIS
Cezary Mazurek	PSNC
Cătălin Meiroşu	TERENA
Kevin Meynell	TERENA
Jari Miettinen	CSC/Funet
Dan Mønster	UNI-C
Mike Norris	HEAnet
Gabriella Paolini	GARR
Victor Reijs	HEAnet
Damien Shaw	UKERNA
Magnus Strømdal	UNINETT
Martin Sutter	SWITCH
Helmut Sverenyak	CESNET, z. s. p. o.
Rob Symberlist	UKERNA
Walter van Dijk	SURFnet
Egon Verharen	SURFnet
Ton Verschuren	SURFnet
John Westerlund	SUNET
Klaas Wierenga	SURFnet