Networking the Future Together

TERENA’s Strategy 2012-2015

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Contents

BUILDING ON TRUST 3

ADAPTING TO A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT 4
  The challenges 4
  Key outcomes of the 2011 SWOT analysis 5
  How the community values TERENA 5
  Key strategic goals 5

ACHIEVING OUR STRATEGIC GOALS 6
  Long-term focus 6
  Immediate priorities 7
Building on trust

TERENA has been ‘networking the networkers’ for more than 25 years: providing a forum in which Europe’s national research and education networking organisations, industry, and research and education institutes meet, exchange information and experience, and collaborate in projects, task forces and events.

With 40 national members from countries in and around Europe, 13 associate members from industry and user organisations, and two international members, the Trans-European Research and Education Networking Association unites the research networking community. The number and diversity of its activities continue to grow.

With TERENA’s demonstrated core values of openness, collaboration and responsiveness, considerable trust in the association has developed within the community. This trust is the foundation upon which TERENA must build, guided by a clear strategic vision.

Leading collaboration on network-related infrastructure and services for the benefit of research and education

openness

collaboration

responsiveness
Adapting to a changing environment

TERENA has successfully operated as Europe’s association for national research and education networking organisations since its inception in 1986. As these organisations and the environment in which they operate have evolved, and as the work of the association has diversified and expanded as a result of their demand, the need has been recognised to make TERENA’s strategy more explicit and have it followed to ensure continued success for TERENA and the community it serves.

In 2011, a TERENA strategy study investigated the European research and education networking environment, including a SWOT analysis (of TERENA’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats), consultation of TERENA stakeholders through a community satisfaction survey, and consultation with TERENA General Assembly members, Executive Committee and Secretariat staff through brainstorming workshops and other inputs.

The strategy study resulted in agreement on four strategic goals and a recognition that steps must be taken in the short term, through the yearly TERENA Activity Plan, to achieve these long term objectives.

The strategic objectives and directions identified here look ahead 2-3 years, providing a bridge to the future. They will be revised annually based on yearly community surveys, strategic analysis and feedback from the research networking community and the TERENA General Assembly, Executive Committee and Secretariat staff.

The challenges

TERENA and the research and education networking community exist in a rapidly evolving environment characterised by technological innovation, growing numbers of service suppliers and ever more demanding and diverse users.

Commercial service providers have increasingly delivered competitive services to institutions and users, while users’ expectations of services and ability to choose providers have increased. At the same time, the global economic crisis has added financial constraints to many NREN operations. For TERENA, the great diversity that exists between NRENs brings benefits in different approaches and solutions, but also challenges in meeting its members’ needs.

Globalisation in research and education means that many achievements are too large or complex to be realised through national initiatives alone. For example, distributed virtual collaborative organisations need the support of excellent global communication and network services, which NRENs are well placed to provide by collaborating with each other, with users and with industry. Such collaboration must be intensified and extended if the research networking community is to stay relevant.
Key outcomes of the 2011 SWOT analysis

TERENA should build on strengths in:
• network security and middleware;
• enabling collaboration, community consensus and people networking;
• aggregating community demand for services, identifying low-hanging fruit in network security areas and evaluating inter-NREN service provisioning.

Address weaknesses regarding:
• liaisons with
  - users, members and stakeholders
  - regions outside Europe – expand reach where mutually beneficial
• management and culture – increase agility and internal integration

How the community values TERENA

• The 2011 community satisfaction survey showed overall satisfaction was high, particularly among national members;
• TERENA Secretariat staff and the association’s ability to provide collaborative opportunities were highly valued;
• TERENA activities (task forces, annual conference, workshops and training events, publications and knowledge transfer tools, community support services) were rated as both highly relevant and of good quality;
• TERENA was judged to play an important role in the development of networking technology, infrastructure and services;
• TERENA should enable more world-wide collaboration;
• TERENA should address community needs in a more timely manner;
• TERENA should respond more to non-technical needs of the community.

Key strategic goals

• Increase and demonstrate the value of TERENA for members
• Develop and strengthen relationships with members and stakeholders
• Ensure the long-term sustainability of TERENA
• Establish and maintain a position of influence for the TERENA community

The annual TERENA Networking Conference (TNC) was rated very highly in community feedback: it brings together around 500 networking specialists, decision makers and managers from research and education networks, institutions and industry.
Achieving our strategic goals

Long-term focus

Increasing and demonstrating the value of TERENA for members

TERENA will work closely with user communities and community stakeholders to stimulate innovation across the research and education networking community and foster new activities.

Knowledge and understanding of community needs will be expanded based on a businesslike marketing approach, assisted with tools such as the annual Compendium and a Community Relationship Management System. Understanding the value of new ideas and the ability to engage better with people will allow TERENA to more proactively lead activities.

TERENA will continue to aggregate community demand for information-sharing workshops, task forces and projects, and for the provision and improvement of services, leveraging the NRENs' collective buying power.

TERENA will develop and work according to a comprehensive, integrated framework of activities that spans technology, communications, workshops, talking with users, and community building.

TERENA will promote its activities to raise community awareness and involvement.

Developing and strengthening relationships with members and stakeholders

TERENA will establish and maintain permanent liaison channels and relationships with its members, the European Commission, e-infrastructure bodies, international user organisations and projects.

Frequent and direct contacts with members and an annual satisfaction survey will be carried out.

Ensuring the long-term sustainability of TERENA

TERENA is always mindful of minimising the costs of its activities; it will pursue cost effective solutions and seek diverse income streams to supplement its funding.

Training plays a key role in disseminating knowledge and expertise; it represents an area where TERENA can play a bigger role in mapping out and meeting user demand. TERENA will further develop its training function by building professional training packages and identifying suitable target audiences. This will be done in close collaboration with interested NRENs.

TERENA will become a centre of knowledge about NRENs and their work, offering consultancy for NRENs and their stakeholders. To this end, tools for information gathering and consultancy should be further developed, building on the Compendium, foresight and other thematic studies.

The organisation’s new marketing approach and development of mid-term financial scenarios and strategies will support this goal, as will the exploration of more flexible financial and logistical arrangements of TERENA events.
Establishing and maintaining a position of influence for the TERENA community

TERENA intends to build the community relationship with the European Commission, an important primary stakeholder, through regular liaison, and together with DANTE will speak with one voice to represent the research networking community’s common interests.

While remaining a European organisation, TERENA will continue to develop relationships with relevant organisations and appropriate bodies in other regions.

TERENA will intensify its role as a global player in fostering coordination of federated services and promoting innovation that involves global collaboration.

TERENA will support actions to reduce the digital divide and promote solidarity between members, by sharing expertise and best practices among the European research and education networking community.

In recognition of the growth of user-driven aspects of its members’ activities, such as outreach, services and business development, and as a reflection of their increasing significance, TERENA will explore ways to better integrate all its own activities and to better represent such areas throughout the association’s structure. It will develop an organisation-wide approach to its communications, marketing and public relations activities.

Immediate priorities

• TERENA will continue to secure significant participation in the GN3+ project and in Horizon 2020 projects.
• Developing the new marketing approach is a priority. TERENA will invest more energy and resources in marketing and developing existing and new services.
• The TERENA Secretariat will devote more effort to its relationships with members and other stakeholders. As part of this work, TERENA will continue dialogue with DANTE about the organisations’ operational and strategic directions and provide one community voice in liaisons with stakeholders, the European Commission and user groups.

More details about how these priorities and other actions will be implemented are described in TERENA’s annual Activity Plan: www.terena.org/about