

Introduction

Since the publication of the first edition of the Compendium, in 2001, it has grown into a sought-after and authoritative source of reference for all those who take an interest in the development of research and education networking. The information contained in the Compendium has continued to grow in variety and dependability, even though caution in interpreting the data remains essential.

The 2002 edition led to comments from a number of sides, both from inside and outside of NREN circles. We would like to express our gratitude here to all those who provided feedback and critical comments. Several NRENs used the Compendium in contacts with their funders. The European Commission saw the value of this work, and approved the COM-REN project, as Accompanying Measure in the IST Programme of the Fifth Framework Programme. Through the COM-REN project, funding has been provided that allowed TERENA to publish the final version of the 2002 edition as well as the 2003 edition.

For the 2003 edition, the Review Panel was composed of the following people: Lajos Bálint (Hungary), Marko Bonac (Slovenia), Urs Eppenberger (Switzerland), Sabine Jaume-Rajaonia (France) and Mike Norris (Ireland). This panel met once and participated in frequent e-mail exchanges during the course of the preparation of the Compendium and the elaboration of the results. These people deserve a large part of the credit for the improvements in this edition of the Compendium.

Even though we were a little bit afraid of questionnaire overload, many NRENs managed to send in their replies to the full questionnaire that was distributed in February 2003. As a result, this edition of the Compendium contains information from 54 NRENs and initiatives to form NRENs, even though from a number of them the information is still quite limited.

The Compendium consists of two parts: the basic information as submitted by the individual NRENs (available only on the web at <http://www.terena.nl/compendium>) and a number of tables and graphs that try to bring together and summarize the information from the NRENs (available on the web and in printed form). Just as in previous years, a limited edition was produced first, for review by the TERENA members. All NRENs that submitted information were given a chance to double-check and update their information, before this edition of the Compendium was prepared.

This publication contains a number of new elements and a new presentation compared to the 2002 edition, for example on the introduction of IPv6. In a number of graphs, comparative information for 2001 and 2002 has been provided. In most of the graphs and tables, data are now presented in the same order of countries. First, the information from the NRENs from the EU and EFTA countries is listed together, then the NRENs from EU Candidate Countries and then the NRENs from other countries, in alphabetical order of the country name (in English). Many other improvements have been made, mainly to increase readability of the graphs.

For the future, further work will be needed, for example on indicator development, on asking less ambiguous questions and especially on focusing on what is really relevant. The COM-REN project envisages a short focus study, to be undertaken later in 2003, that is intended to shed more light on specific aspects of the work of NRENs or the context in which they function in Europe.

It is hoped that this third edition of the Compendium will prove to be at least as valuable as the previous ones. Feedback is again invited and will be key to the future development of the Compendium!

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TERENA Chief Administrative Officer.

Some Remarks on the Methods Used and the Underlying Data

Designing a questionnaire that is unambiguous for people all across Europe is not easy. The experiences from the 2002 edition were helpful in refining the questions for this edition.

In the data presented here, "University education" refers to ISCED 1997 levels 5 and 6, or ISCED 1976 levels 5, 6 and 7. For more information on the ISCED scheme, see http://www.uis.unesco.org/en/act/act_p/isced.html. Information on the numbers of students has been taken from OECD (for OECD countries) and from UNESCO (for other countries); in almost all cases, the data is from 2001.

Collecting data of this type typically requires the involvement of a number of people from each NREN, as well as careful checking by NREN staff. For many NRENs, it proved to be difficult or impossible to answer all of the questions. For future years, it will be important to try to ask fewer questions, but in an unambiguous and easy to answer way.

For several countries, we have received replies from two NRENs or NREN initiatives. Therefore, in most of the tables and graphs the English-language abbreviation of the NREN's name has been used in order to denote the NREN. In Azerbaijan, the Open Societies Institute has started an initiative that is tentatively called AzNET. In Belarus, the NREN is operated by the National Centre of Information Resources and Technologies (NCIRT) but is known as BASNET. In the tables, these two acronyms have been put in brackets.

A number of NRENs or NREN initiatives have become known to TERENA that we do not have a questionnaire from. The table below lists them, with URLs, where known.

Country	NREN	URL
Egypt	EUN	http://www.eun.eg/
Iran	IRANET/IPM	http://www.iranet.ir
Kyrgyz Republic	AKNET (KRENA)	http://www.aknet.kg/
Lebanon	CNRS	http://www.cnrs.edu.lb/index.html
Malta	CSC.UM	http://www.csc.um.edu.mt/
Romania	RNC	http://www.rnc.ro/new/welcome.shtml
Tajikistan	TARENA	
Tunisia	RNU	http://www.cck.rnu.tn

Three projects are relevant in this context:

- * The EUMEDCONNECT project aims at research and education networking in the Mediterranean region:
<http://www.dante.net/eumedconnect/>;
- * the SEEREN project aims at research and education networking in South-Eastern Europe
<http://www.seeren.org/>;
- * the Virtual Silk Highway project is aimed at Central Asian countries
<http://www.silkproject.org/>.

In addition, CEENet (<http://www.ceenet.org/>) maintains contacts and provides support to many NRENs in Central and Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union.

Some information about NRENs on other continents is available from the ALICE project for Latin America:

<http://www.dante.net/alice/partner.html>,

from CCIRN

<http://www.ccirn.org/related.html>

and from the ARENA project of Internet 2

<http://arena.internet2.edu/>.