

PRESS RELEASE

Mediterranean-Arab countries met in Amman to discuss e-Infrastructures for Research and Education

Amman, 12 June 2007. *From 7th to 12th June, Amman hosted a whole week dedicated aiming at discussing the role of eInfrastructures for research and education to promote development and fight the digital divide and brain drain in developing countries.*

The information week, organized by the Jordanian Universities Network (JUNet), the Jordanian National Research and Education Network (NREN) in the framework of the EUMEDGRID project, included two workshops, one of which was dedicated to the research community and the IT infrastructure providers in the Universities and Research Centers. The other workshop was dedicated to politicians and decision makers in the Ministries and Universities and Research Centers. Several meetings took place with leading research organizations in Jordan, such as SESAME and the Royal Scientific Society. Several internal and side-meetings took also place.

Both workshops were conceived as single information days, providing a complete picture of eInfrastructures in Europe and the Mediterranean and their role towards development and collaboration.

Discussed topics ranged from the existing eInfrastructures available to researchers in Europe and in the Mediterranean area (namely the EUMEDCONNECT network and EUMEDGRID pilot grid testbed) and their possible evolution, to success stories of applications already running on these eInfrastructures.

The event was also an important opportunity to bring together Jordanian researchers, make them acquainted of the existence and potential of Grid technology and elaborate on the Jordanians efforts and initiatives in eInfrastructures and applications.

The GÈANT network was presented as a success story for implementing a PAN European Research Network. The Greek Research Network GRNET was also presented as a successful model for a national NREN, also thanks to the experience gained in other world regions, such as the South-Eastern Europe.

Discussing the Future was the title of discussion panel which took place at the end of the policy-level information day. The panelists represented the Government, Universities and Research Centers from Syria, Palestine, Jordan and key project managers from EU. The discussion covered sustainability in the MED countries and future opportunities for more collaboration and enhancement of the eInfrastructure in the MED countries.

Ministers and executive-level actors from Governmental organizations, universities and research institution took part in the event, which raised interest on EUMEDGRID and further initiatives. "The experiences presented in this seminar are very useful in order to find motivation and justification to fund eInfrastructures and, in the meanwhile, generating internal support in the countries: it is indeed of the utmost importance to act both on the top-

down and bottom-up approaches, if we are to achieve enduring results.” commented A.Armanzi, the General Manager of Scientific Research Center, Syria.

One of the key issues is still funding: on the average, Mediterranean countries dedicate only 1% of gdp to research. “This is a typical chicken-and-egg problem, and we are working to break it, otherwise researchers in the Region won’t ever exploit leading edge technologies: there should be investments, of course, but they should be coordinated, in order not to disperse effort: that’s why we organize such kind of workshop, to bring together researchers, decision makers and people for ministries. But , although this process can be supported, it cannot be driven from the outside: because each country needs to find its own model, also taking into account the effort done in neighbouring countries.”

“We often speak of “developing countries”, and this may be misleading: because all countries are indeed developing, but some need to develop faster, or they’ll never catch up , and the digital gap will never close again” says Dr. Federico Ruggieri, Project Manager of EUMEDGRID.



However, delegates seem to be well aware of challenges and opportunities represented by eInfrastructures, and resolute to go farther on the path initiated by EUMEDCONNECT in 2001 and pursued by EUMEDGRID: “

I am confident that this event had created better awareness at both the users and the political levels about the importance of Research Networks and the EUMEDCONNECT and EUMEDGRID projects. The event will also be the first step towards the creation of a National Grid Initiative in Jordan. I plan to submit a proposal to the Ministry in a month time” says Yousef Torman, JUNet Director

Slides and materials from the presentations are available at:

<https://agenda.eumedgrid.org/conferenceTimeTable.py?confId=41>

JUNet is a non profit company founded by the public Universities to manage the network and applications that use this network. JUNet is acting as the coordinator and facilitator for effort aimed at developing and maintaining common services for the Universities. JUNet also represents the Jordanian Research community in the EUMEDCONNECT and EUMEDGRID projects.

www.junet.edu.jo



The **EUMEDCONNECT** project is a pioneering initiative to establish and operate an IP-based network in the Mediterranean region. Countries in the Mediterranean region able to benefit from the EUMEDCONNECT project are Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey. The EUMEDCONNECT network serves the research and education communities of the Mediterranean region, and is linked to the pan-European GÉANT2 network (www.eumedconnect.net)

The **EUMEDGRID** initiative aims to set up in the Mediterranean a grid infrastructure for Research, which can become part of EGEE and be integrated with analogous initiatives in the Balkans, North Europe, Latin America and Far-East Asia. Another EUMEDGRID's purpose is to raise grid awareness and competences among the researchers operating in the Mediterranean area, to make them able to profit of this new powerful tool, to foster collaboration with European and worldwide projects and to promote scientific and industrial development in the area.

Further information about GRID:

<http://gridcafe.web.cern.ch/gridcafe/>

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