

Commission grants Euro 93 million to upgrade European Research and Education Internet (GÉANT)

A contract to upgrade Europe's world-leading GÉANT communications network for research and education has been signed by the European Commission in Brussels. Upgrades will include high-performance services for the most demanding network users, giving researchers their own "wavelengths" across the continent; end-to-end connectivity, which will give scientists direct access to the advanced communication capabilities of GÉANT and Europe's national research networks; and a mobility and roaming service that will enable scientists to stay connected to GÉANT wherever they are doing their research. GÉANT and its partners, the National Research and Education Networks (NRENs), together provide the research communications backbone infrastructure for 34 countries in Europe. The European Commission's contribution to this project, €93 million, is estimated at less than 50% of total expenditure. The remainder will be co-financed by the participating countries.

"Providing scientists across the EU with a state-of-the-art communications architecture, delivering performance far superior to the services offered by today's commercial Internet, enables the EU to increase its ability to innovate and compete – an ability that is in turn essential to its productivity and growth", noted Enterprise and Information Society Commissioner Olli Rehn. "Industry take-up of GÉANT's current architecture and design is encouraging, and is paying dividends. From the first quarter of 2005, the upgraded GÉANT network infrastructure will further expand the supply of advanced communication technology services, and should prompt a further wave of information and communication technology innovation, leading to a more efficient and cost effective provision of internet services to citizens", he added.

Commission funding for GÉANT under this contract, which runs until September 2008, comes from the EU Research and Development Framework Programme. GÉANT enables all researchers from Iceland to the Caucasus to pool their ideas, data and computing power to achieve results that they could never manage alone. For example, GÉANT supports advanced collaboration tools used by the aerospace industry and the European Space Agency (ESA). It has played an important part in stimulating take-up of Internet Protocol IPv6, which is bringing advanced Internet services into homes, businesses and even vehicles, and has even enabled astronomers to combine data from several radio telescopes, enabling them to view the early universe in exquisite detail.

The upgraded GÉANT network, co-ordinated by DANTE, will use a "hybrid" architecture that seamlessly combines the best technology from the worlds of telephony (switching) and the Internet (routing).

This will provide faster, more powerful services for the most demanding users, creating dedicated routes along predictable traffic paths. End-to-end connectivity will enable scientists to have their “own” virtual private networks. A new mobility and roaming service will allow scientists to stay connected to GÉANT, wherever they are working.

For further information:

<http://www.geant.net>