



Press Release

Research and Education Networks Achieve Major Step Towards Closing the Mediterranean Digital Divide

EUMEDCONNECT project installs first new link in pioneering initiative to improve telecommunications networking for research and education in Mediterranean region

Cambridge, UK, 27th April 2004 – DANTE “Delivery of Advanced Network Technology to Europe” is pleased to announce the entry into operation of the EUMEDCONNECT network’s first new link. The 45Mbps circuit between Algiers and Madrid connects the Algerian NREN, ARN, which is managed by CERIST, to the GÉANT pan-European research network for the first time.

EUMEDCONNECT is a project funded by the European Commission within the framework of the MEDA Regional Programme. It is establishing an IP-based network serving the research and education communities of the Mediterranean region and linking to the pan-European GÉANT network. The contract for the link between Algeria and Spain was awarded to Telefonica following a public tender. It will be followed shortly by more circuits, benefitting other Mediterranean countries by connecting them to one another and to GÉANT. The new circuits add to existing circuits connecting the NRENs (National Research and Education Networks) of Cyprus, Israel, Malta and Turkey to GÉANT through these countries’ ongoing direct involvement in the pan-European research network project.

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The EUMEDCONNECT network will transform the scale and reach of Mediterranean research and education networking. For the first time, national research centres and institutions in the Mediterranean region will have dedicated connectivity to one another, to over 3500 research and education establishments in Europe, and to other research communities worldwide.

“The EUMEDCONNECT project is starting to produce real results with the achievement of this Algeria-GÉANT link. EUMEDCONNECT is very important for research and education in the Mediterranean,” said Mme Aouaouche El-Maouhab, Manager of the Algerian NREN at CERIST (Centre de Recherche sur l’Information Scientifique et Technique). “It opens up major new opportunities for researchers in our region, making collaboration in virtual international research a real prospect for the first time.”

The network represents a major step towards overcoming the region’s digital divide, enabling Mediterranean researchers to participate in European research projects, and in international collaborations thanks to GÉANT’s connections to research and education networks around the world. The initiative will also act as a catalyst for the further development of the in-country research and education networks, and encourage the development of the Internet in the Mediterranean.

Dai Davies, General Manager of DANTE, said, “The countries bordering the south and east of the Mediterranean so far haven’t benefitted from the development of communications technology as much as more developed regions. EUMEDCONNECT is making an important contribution to changing this situation, and has been made possible by the success of GÉANT in Europe. It is satisfying to think that in future Mediterranean researchers will be able to transfer data at much faster rates.”

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About EUMEDCONNECT:

EUMEDCONNECT is providing dedicated Internet connections between the research and educational communities of the Mediterranean region and will link them to Europe by connecting to GÉANT, the pan-European research and education network. The project is being funded until June 2006 with 10 M Euros from the European Commission's EUMEDIS programme, which aims to promote the Information Society in the region. The project is co-ordinated by DANTE. Its Mediterranean partners are the National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) of the following countries and territories: Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey. Its European partners are GRNET, GARR, RedIRIS and RENATER, the NRENs in Greece, Italy, Spain and France respectively. Following a tender issued in February 2003, contracts are being awarded for the EUMEDCONNECT Internet connections for service starting during 2004.

- MORE “ABOUT” -

About DANTE:

DANTE's name derives from the acronym 'Delivery of Advanced Network Technology to Europe'. Owned by European NRENs (National Research and Education Networks), it is an organisation whose purpose is to plan, build and operate pan-European networks for research and education. Working in partnership with Europe's NRENs and in cooperation with the European Commission, DANTE has been fundamental to the success of European research and education networking over the last decade, providing the data communications infrastructure essential to the success of many research projects in Europe today.

About GÉANT:

Reaching over 3,500 research and education institutions in 32 European countries through its direct connection to 28 National and Regional Research and Education Networks (NRENs), and also offering high-speed international connectivity to other world regions, GÉANT provides the highest capacity and offers the greatest geographic coverage of any network of its kind in the world. Enabling researchers to compete on an international stage by providing them with a world-class backbone that offers the bandwidth and services required for research activities at this level, GÉANT has dual roles of providing an infrastructure to support research and education, as well as providing an infrastructure for research itself.

GÉANT is a project co-funded by the European Commission under the Fifth Research & Development Framework Programme. The project partners are 26 European NRENs, together with DANTE as the co-ordinating partner.

Detailed information about EUMEDCONNECT can be found at <http://www.dante.net/server/show/nav.008>.

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