




EaPConnect
 Eastern Partnership Connect

KNOWLEDGE WITHOUT BORDERS: EAPCONNECT

Now around halfway through its 5-year run, the Eastern Partnership Connect (EaPConnect) project is not only providing promised network connectivity between Europe and its Eastern Partnership neighbours (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine), it is also building the human networks that are vital if research and education collaborations are to flourish and grow.

These human networks are formed through events where knowledge is exchanged, such as training events, conferences and workshops. To date eight workshops have been held, where project partners and associate partners mix, learn about and from each other. More workshops are in the planning, and a larger, regional conference is having its second edition on 27-28 September.

EaPEC2017 **Eastern Partnership** **E-infrastructure** **Conference**

The second Eastern Partnership E-infrastructure Conference (EaPEC 2017) will be hosted in Minsk by the Belarusian NREN, BASNET. EaPEC

brings together researchers, policy-makers, students and other interested parties from the EaP region to hear the latest about how network and computing infrastructures support Open Science.

Putting theory into practice, EaPConnect offers practical support to the wider research and education community from the EaP region through the Enlighten Your Research programme, which culminates at EaPEC 2017. The EYR outreach activity was the brainchild

Pictures
 Left to right:
 Robotics
 workshop; EYR
 programme co-
 ordinator Mary
 Hester; Business
 models work-
 shop



of the Dutch NREN, SURFnet, which still leads the programme and contributes to EaPConnect as an associate partner.

Researchers, invited to submit EYR proposals for research projects that would make use of infrastructures and associated technologies and services, this year submitted a record 30-plus proposals. And that's a record not only for the EaP region – where the programme is being run for the second time (EYR@EaP 2017) – but also across all EYR initiatives globally.

“We have seen a great response from the EaP countries for the EYR programme. Researchers working on HPC, Open Data, and digitisation have submitted final projects from every country, requesting resources from and collaborating with PRACE, SURFsara, and PSNC, for example. We look forward to collaborating with the EaP NRENs to support these projects and enable the research,” says Mary Hester of SURFnet, coordinator EYR programme.

Selecting the winning EYR@EaP 2017 proposals from among so many was a challenge, but winners will be presented in an award ceremony during the EaPEC 2017 conference. Then the real work will begin, as the project leaders and the infrastructure and service providers work together so the projects can get started.

EaPEC 2017 will also feature keynote speeches from the flagship Human Brain Project and the HPC-Project PRACE, as well as mini-workshops, lightning talks and poster presentations.

EaPEC 2017 is open for anyone who wishes to attend: see the conference schedule and register online via www.eapec.eu.

Workshops

EaPConnect workshops are primarily targeted at the six project beneficiary partners, to share knowledge in



a wide range of areas, including NRENs' business support activities, implementation of new services and specific technical competences. Added together, these events have supported knowledge exchange among around 100 participants from 15 countries. Topics covered to date include:

- robotics
- digitisation of cultural heritage
- business models
- clouds
- real-time communication / Low Latency (LoLA)

The Georgian NREN GRENA has the highest participation record from among the EaP NRENs: “Participation of GRENA staff in workshops organised by EaPConnect has been very useful for obtaining information about new developments in specific areas,” says Ramaz Kvatadze, Executive Director of GRENA. “In particular, the workshops devoted to clouds, digitisation of cultural heritage and to business models featured experts from the European NRENs who provided their experience and expertise to workshop participants in a very valuable way.”

Workshops in the pipeline will cover:

- e-health
- cyber security
- Software Defined Networking
- marketing and communications
- clouds

By developing skills and services across this wide range of areas, EaPConnect and its EU partner NRENs are ultimately helping the EaP NRENs to diversify their business offer and thus to attract new users. In this way they will be in a better position to support of research and education activities. This can only benefit the Eastern Partnership region and its peers and partners in Europe and beyond.

www.eapconnect.eu



PROFILE: LEONIE SCHÄFER (DFN) – EAPCONNECT TRAINING AND EVENTS COORDINATOR

Within DFN, the German NREN, I am responsible for International Liaisons - i.e. fostering collaboration with GÉANT members and international partners. DFN has a good working relationship with the major GÉANT NRENs, but there are upcoming or newly-established NRENs that also deserve attention as these countries can present emerging economies with lots of expertise and human power. I heard about the EaPConnect project when it just had started and was intrigued by the combination of countries involved. I believe that the EC's Eastern Neighbourhood Programme is an important policy opportunity for previously closed countries such as Belarus to strengthen ties with EC countries. Also, I was interested to learn more about the EaP countries, their challenges and what expertise they bring with them. So the EaPConnect project fits very well with my DFN work. One benefit has been to learn more about EC Directorates General. Within the context of GÉANT, DFN's working relationship with the EC had focused mainly on collaboration with DG Connect. Now with EaPConnect, other DGs such as DG NEAR, DG EAC, and DG RTD come into play. EaPConnect activities take on a high policy level; EaPConnect is an important project for DG NEAR and has a high visibility. We are asked to present at EC EaP summits, which gives us high visibility even at Commissioner level. Furthermore, the project allows its project members to collaborate with each other intensively and this way to establish new ties and work relationships and this also opens up new opportunities for DFN towards Eastern Europe. The broader value of this project, I would say, is to bring together researchers, scientists and NREN members from EaP and EC countries. As a convinced European I value the opportunity to promote the advantages and benefits of the European Union to its neighbours and to foster cooperation between these different parties. The design of all the different EaPConnect workshops, diagnosing what is needed, developing an interesting programme and inviting suitable presenters, is a challenging task. The most challenging experience to date was to organise a conference within 3 months at a place where I had never been, more than 3000 km away. That was our first EaPEC conference, in Tbilisi, Georgia, and it was a huge success. We will continue organising these conferences in the EaP partner countries, which promises new challenges and adventures to look forward to.