Eastern Partners anticipate benefits of 2nd EaPConnect project

EaPConnect entered a second phase in July 2020. The 60-month EU-funded 'EU4Digital: Connecting Research and Education Communities' (EaPConnect) project will build on the achievements of the first 5 years, bringing together the R&E communities from EU and Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries and reducing the digital divide.

Words: Laura Durnford, GÉANT

The project aims to:

- extend the network infrastructure to scale up scientific exchange across borders,
- increase the use and quality of services and offer new services to enhance international R&E cooperation,
- strengthen the position of EaP NRENs in their national R&E ecosystems in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine,
- build knowledge, skills and community through events, training, mentorships, and other initiatives.

A key goal is to achieve long-term sustainability of EaPConnect partners, raise their visibility and show their value. Interacting with research communities that are potential users of partners networks and services is a growing focus of activity.

So what do the partners anticipate will be the most significant outcomes of the second EaPConnect project for their countries and organisations?

URAN:

"One of the most anticipated outcomes is bringing our digital services for R&E to European standards, as Ukraine is heading towards EU integration and standardisation is a very important part of the process. We also expect to build powerful new 100Gb/s channels to a GÉANT PoP and Moldova. These will allow us to connect Ukrainian big data scientists to special networks such as LHCONE, or, for example, to transfer very large photos of the Earth from Copernicus."

Yevhenii Preobrazhenskyi,
Executive Director

GRENA:

"I am certain that the new project will benefit Georgian R&E in numerous ways. One will be the increased number of users benefiting from the highly reliable network and the implemented services: eduroam, eduGAIN, cybersecurity, Cloud etc. EaPConnect will help establish new and strengthen existing collaborations between Georgian and European partners."

Ramaz Kvatadze, Executive Director

RENAM:

"It is crucial for research teams from Moldova to collaborate with colleagues from the EU and EaP countries, to work with them on joint projects. EaPConnect will support this collaboration by providing extended connectivity, innovative services and by promoting Open Science principles to national research and educational institutions".

Peter Bogatencov, Chairman of the RENAM Management Board

AzScienceNet:

"In the new project, I expect we will witness the introduction of ever smarter, increasingly advanced network services, that take into account any developments arising in the ongoing Fourth Industrial Revolution and artificial intelligence technologies."

Prof. Rasim Alguliyev, Vice President of ANAS

BASNET:

"BASNET will become a more powerful and recognised partner for supporting national and international projects of R&E in Belarus, with greater network coverage and more services implemented for the benefit of researchers, students and lecturers. Thousands of researchers from Belarus would be able to access EOSC and European e-infrastructures in their projects using GÉANT and BASNET."

Sergei Kozlov, Head of Network Administration Sector, UIIP NASB

ASNET-AM:

"Advanced high-speed networks using innovative technologies; a rich portfolio of services to address the current and future demands of academia and educators; accelerating scientific research by providing state-of-the-art e-infrastructures; and the availability of thematic Research Infrastructures shaping EOSC. These are the outcomes I am anticipating for ASNET-AM and Armenia."

Hrachya Astsatryan, Director, IIAP NAS RA

Erik Huizer, CEO of GÉANT, also foresees that the project will further integrate the Eastern Partner countries with the GÉANT community:

"I hope and expect that EaPConnect2 will realise a sustainable national education and research network on a par with the rest of Europe in all six countries involved."

Partners

The benefciary partners are IIAP NAS RA (Armenia – ASNET-AM), IIT of ANAS (Azerbaijan - AzScienceNet), UIIP NASB (Belarus- BASNET), GRENA (Georgia), RENAM (Moldova) and URAN (Ukraine). Co-benefciary partners are DFN (Germany), EENet of HITSA (Estonia), LITNET (Lithuania), GRNET (Greece), GARR (Italy), PSNC (Poland), RoEduNet (Romania) and SURF (the Netherlands).

The partners will work together in further conferences, workshops, mentorship relationships and other collaborative activities to achieve the project objectives and ensure the sustainability of research and education networking in the Eastern Partnership region.

Funding

The project is funded under the EU4Digital initiative of the European Union. The European Commission's Directorate General for Neighbourhoods and Enlargements Negotiations (DG NEAR) is contributing 95% (€10m) towards the costs, providing funding to the second EaPConnect project under Grant Agreement number ENI/2019/407-452; the remaining 5% is being co-funded by the six beneficiary countries.

EU4Digital aims to extend the European Union's Digital Single Market to the Eastern Partner states, developing the potential of the digital economy and society, in order to bring economic growth, generate more jobs, improve people's lives and help businesses. Through EU4Digital, the EU supports Eastern Partnership countries on reducing roaming tariffs, developing high-speed broadband to boost economies and expand e-services, harmonising digital frameworks across society, in areas ranging from logistics to health, building cyber security, developing skills, and creating more jobs in the digital industry.

Further information

www.eapconnect.eu

https://eufordigital.eu/