



EMERGING NRENS PROGRAMME: STRENGTHENING THE COMMUNITY

“Meeting new people is never time wasted, especially when it broadens the whole NREN community and us as individuals.”

Participating NRENs in the Emerging NREN Programme

Albania, Afghanistan, Armenia, Belarus, Benin, France, Georgia, Ireland, Italy, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Madagascar, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Netherlands, Nigeria, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Tajikistan, UK, Ukraine

The first Emerging NREN Programme (ENP) event took place at TNC, GÉANT's flagship conference in June this year. Sixteen programme participants from fourteen countries - with very diverse backgrounds - not only joined the conference, but were also actively involved in the event - together with professionals operating in similar fields of interest - through specifically designed sessions and networking activities.

Each ENP participant was paired up with a representative from a European NREN or a GÉANT member of staff who shared a similar professional background. This aimed to facilitate relationship building and provide a point of reference during the very busy TNC18 that welcomed over 750 participants from across the globe and featured multiple presentations, meetings and demonstrations.

Some of the programme participants embarked on long journeys from Africa and Asia - one of the delegates had never left their country before - to reach TNC18 in Trondheim, Norway, while others travelled from the immediate European NREN neighbourhood. Some of them were fairly new to the community, but there was also a small contingent of long-standing community members. The different starting points in the experience of each participant never represented an obstacle, as one of the programme's main objectives was to create a special and unique experience for every single attendee.

Picture
ENP attendees group photos

Top row from left to right:

Dzmitry Dzenisiuk, BASNET, Belarus

Alisher Davlatov, TARENA, Tajikistan

Zarlyk Jumabek uulu, CAREN NOC, Kyrgyzstan

Qazim Tahiri, University of Prishtina, Kosovo

Aleksandra Radulovic, MREN, Montenegro

Ruslan Karimberdiev, KRENA, Kyrgyzstan

Maxim Orbu, RENAM, Moldova

Sanja Simonova, MARNET, Macedonia

Bottom row from left to right:

Samia El Haddouti, MARWAN, Morocco

Vitalina Morais Baptista, MoRENet, Mozambique

Harimino Rakotondrainibe, i RENALA, Madagascar

Joke Atinuke Badejo, Covenant University, Nigeria

Veronika Di Luna, GÉANT

Temitope Mercy John, Covenant University, Nigeria

Iza Advadze, GRENA, Georgia

Busy programme of activities at TNC18

Three ENP participants were selected to take part in the Lightning Talks presentations and were also able to benefit from speakers' training sessions prior to the event; three more were selected for the poster sessions. On the first day of the conference, an informal dinner brought all participants together and was the official kick off of the programme's activities. Other events specifically organised for the ENP included a walk through Trondheim, led by an engineer from Uninett, the Norwegian NREN, following the network's physical traceroute of the city's infrastructure. ENP delegates also attended a specifically organised session on The Case for NRENs and a day at the Uninett office and NOC packed with presentations and talks on relevant topics. The ENP specific activities were complementary to the overall TNC18 programme, which meant that delegates were able to attend all plenary and parallel sessions, demonstrations, side meetings and social events to which they were all invited as fully fledged TNC18 delegates.

Ultimately all ENP participants had the opportunity to get to know each other in person, bond and widen their networks within the programme itself and the community at large.

Enriching experience

The final assessment by all those who took part was unanimously positive, all delegates felt that the ENP generated a great deal of thought-provoking discussions, stimulated ideas for further collaborations and training and produced some concrete agreements between NRENs, plus future planned visits and helped to broaden horizons. From ideas for personal development to practical improvements of NOC logistics and processes, each participant was undoubtedly enriched by the experience. The following testimonials show the impact of the ENP in the words of its participants:

"The programme gave me the motivation to further develop BASNET's network and infrastructure of my city and the entire country."

"The visit of the Uninett office was really helpful and gave me a good insight of how an NREN works and the technical improvements that can be carried out."

"It was quite a surprise that the infrastructure we struggle or make great efforts to access in Nigeria is so readily available in Europe and other parts of the world."

"As part of the Uninett visit, I had the opportunity to witness first-hand how a modern, technically advanced NREN operates. I picked up some ideas for our future developments e.g. circular air ventilation in the server room and use of information screens in the NOC."

The programme was also praised by the participants from European NRENs who found it as useful for the Emerging NRENs as rewarding for the entire community.

Veronika Di Luna, International Relations Officer for GÉANT, who coordinated the programme, commented: "The programme was a success; we will continue to develop it and plan to take it to TNC19. In the meanwhile, we are making good progress with all discussions started at TNC18 and are strengthening the newly established contacts. We will combine new ideas for the next phase with all lessons learned in 2018 and will apply them to next year's programme planning".