

# THE GÉANT FUTURE TALENT PROGRAMME SHINES AT TNC18



**Picture**  
From left to right:  
Jorge Mendes  
( FCT/FCCN),  
Simone Ferretti  
(GARR),  
Antonio Angel  
Cruzado  
(RedIRIS),  
Davide Michelino  
(GARR),  
José Brito  
(FCT/FCCN),  
Ilaria Bortolotti  
(GARR),  
Melchor Alejo  
Garau Madrigal  
(RedIRIS),  
Rüdiger Birkner  
(SWITCH),  
Gijs Rijnders  
(SURFnet),  
Nadia Sluer  
(GÉANT),  
Tom Fryer  
(GÉANT).

This year the Future Talent Programme (FTP), in partnership with a number of European NRENs and supported by the European Commission, selected nine students to present at TNC18.

Each year GÉANT seeks to discover young inspiring talents from the European NREN community to take part in its Future Talent Programme. This initiative offers these talents an intense learning track giving them the opportunity to showcase their projects in an impactful manner to a target audience, using specific skills.

Finalists are invited to TNC – GÉANT's flagship conference - to present to an audience of over 750 GÉANT community members.

This year the registration for the FTP received fifteen entries from GÉANT NREN partner organisations including BELNET, FCT/FCCN, GARR, SWITCH, RedIRIS, Restena and Surfnet.

All fifteen registered students received professional training and coaching on how to build an abstract, present a topic in five minutes, engage the audience and also control pre-presentation anxiety. Poster presenters were paired up with creative students from MOMÉ University in Hungary to improve their preparation and visualisation techniques.

A total of nine entries were selected for the lightning talk plenary and poster sessions at TNC18 in Trondheim, Norway. All finalists delivered outstanding talks and were commended by the audience for their performances.

For the majority of the young talents TNC18 was – in their own words -

“the most amazing experience in their lives” whilst, some of them, forged new friendships, overcame fear or public speaking and seized brand new opportunities.

Special thanks go to top speaker coach Barbara Rogoski of Successfulspeakersnow, to data visualisation coach Lennaert Jonkert of Developminded.com and to experienced presenters from GÉANT such as Tom Fryer and Annabel Grant; plus to all dedicated mentors and supporters from the participating NRENs, the GÉANT events team, the TNC Programme Committee and finally the GÉANT Learning and Development (GLAD) team.

## What did the Future Talent Programme mean to the students who took part? How did it affect them and influence their plans for the future? Learn about it in the following short testimonials.



### The connection among us was immediate

**Name:** Rüdiger Birkner  
**University:** ETHZ - ETH Zurich  
**Activity:** Lightning Talks  
**Title:** Hey network, what's going on?  
-- Virtual assistants for networks  
**NREN:** SWITCH, Switzerland

As a PhD student at ETH Zürich doing research on network monitoring and management, I am always eager to meet network operators and engineers. When I was approached by SWITCH, our national NREN, with the opportunity to take part in a selection to attend TNC18, I did not hesitate for one moment to seize the opportunity.

During the months leading up to the conference, we attended several webinars led by a professional speakers' coach. Organised in small groups, the coach guided us through the entire process from identifying the main points to writing the speech's full script. Through these webinars and one-to-one coaching, I learned several new techniques to enable me to effectively convey my message and engage the audience.

Before the start of the conference we received the invitation to the FTP WhatsApp group set up by GÉANT. Through this we could all follow each other on our journeys from all over Europe to Trondheim. And finally, it was great to meet everybody in person: the connection among us was immediate.

The conference started with an inspiring keynote and soon after it was already my turn to take on the stage and present my lightning talk on Net2Text. Being able to present my current work in front of several hundred people, discuss my ideas with network operators, gather feedback and better understand the challenges and problems they face, has been an invaluable experience for me.

My participation in the FTP certainly helped me improve my speaking skills and offered me the great opportunity to present in front of large audiences. In addition, it enabled me to connect with like-minded students from all over Europe and explore together the beautiful Trondheim.



### The moment I stepped on the stage will stay in my mind forever

**Name:** Jorge Miguel Mendes  
**University:** University of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro (UTAD)  
**Activity:** Lightning Talks  
**Title:** mySense - AI and Big Data for agricultural applications  
**NREN:** FCT/FCCN, Portugal

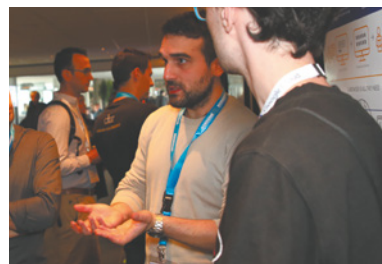
I had just started my doctoral thesis when I was made aware of the GÉANT Future Talent Programme (FTP) via the Computer and Communications Services of my university.

After being selected at national level by the FCCN unit of FCT I had the opportunity to attend a series of e-workshops held by a professional speaker coach. The lessons and coaching sessions were an enrichment for my career as I learned a variety of techniques to improve my communication skills and to successfully present my ideas to a target audience. Among my many memories of TNC18, the moment I stepped on the stage and faced the audience, will stay in my mind forever. The initial emotion was strong, but as soon as I began to feel the connection with the public, just as I had been taught in the e-workshops, everything started to flow naturally.

To present for the first time to a global audience of over 750 people, made up of delegates from many different fields of research, and with English not being my native language, it certainly was my biggest challenge at TNC18.

I was able to benefit from professional training, meet people from all over the world, get out of my comfort zone, grow up as a researcher and broaden my horizons. It was amazing to be able to share my work so widely and I was also so proud to represent my country.

It was an incredible event and I hope it is just the beginning of a journey that will be filled with many more experiences like this.



### I feel truly grateful for this wonderful opportunity

**Name:** Simone Ferretti  
**University:** INFN Sezione di Roma Tor Vergata  
**Activity:** Poster Pursuit  
**Title:** V-Labs  
**NREN:** GARR, Italy

I knew about TNC, but I had never heard of the GÉANT Future Talent Programme (FTP) until I was approached by GARR, as I hold one of their scholarships.

I really enjoyed the e-workshops offered by the FTP as these gave me the chance to improve my presentation and communication skills plus the ability to focus on my project and to visualize it.

I remember the first day of the conference, I was confused and amazed at the same time: people from every part of the world were there to cooperate and reach new heights in research networking. The initial overwhelming feeling disappeared and I started to feel at ease as soon as I became aware that we were all there to achieve the same goals whilst trying to solve different problems. And this is also what TNC meant to me, we are all brought together by the need to learn more about the issues our world is facing and collaborate to find solutions. TNC also enabled me to bond with a great group of individuals and professionals, and I feel truly grateful for this wonderful opportunity.

My initial biggest challenge was having to share my project and my vision, but thanks to the training and preparation undergone with GÉANT coaches, it wasn't as traumatic as I had originally feared.

In the future I'd like to cooperate with the inspiring people I met at TNC in order to continue using all the knowledge I acquired from this experience, coupled with my transformed communication and visualisation skills.

The Lightning Talks sessions were my favourite part of TNC18, they gave all participants the opportunity to tell their story in a very impactful and concise way and to the audience to learn about different cultures, places and problems.