

WE MET REDOUANE MERROUCH

Head of the Moroccan Academic and Research Wide Area Network (MARWAN) at Centre National pour la Recherche Scientifique et Technique (CNRST)



MARWAN's recent connection to GÉANT via a 1 Gbps ASREN link marks Morocco's re-joining the international R&E networking community with the support of the EU-funded AfricaConnect2 project. We asked Redouane about what this means for his country and for collaborative research in the Mediterranean - and further afield.

Félicitations Redouane! How does it feel to be connected again?

It's worth remembering that in 2004 Morocco was the first country in the South Mediterranean region to get connected to GÉANT, so it feels a bit like a homecoming after a short absence. I would like to thank all my colleagues at GÉANT and ASREN who have helped us through the AfricaConnect2 project to make this happen. I also give special thanks to the director of CNRST, Prof.

Mohamed Khalfaoui, for his support and engagement: it reflects our strong belief that this connection is essential for Morocco's R&E community to thrive and to consolidate even further the bond with peers in other parts of the world, especially in Europe. In a nutshell: we are back on the global R&E scene!

Tell us more about MARWAN

MARWAN is the Moroccan national research and education network that was created in 1998. Over the years it has evolved - slowly but steadily - despite significant governance and funding constraints.

Today we are at the 4th edition of our network - MARWAN 4 - which is built on a VPLS / L2 telecom operator backbone and connects all of the 200 universities and research institutes across Morocco with a bandwidth speed of up to 5 Gbps.

MARWAN provides access to the commodity internet, nationwide R&E connectivity across Morocco and, thanks to the recent reconnection, to GÉANT and the global R&E networking community. In addition, we have a solid service offering, including HPC, eduroam, identity federation - just recently we joined eduGAIN, IPv6 and collaboration tools, such as the Colaboratorio platform.

Can you give some examples of users that will benefit from the new connectivity?

As mentioned before, our scientists collaborate with European colleagues on several research programmes, some of which are large-scale ones, such as the high-energy physics ATLAS experiment and the undersea ANTARES neutrino telescope. Each of these projects involves researchers at several sites across Morocco, all connected to MARWAN and now onwards to GÉANT. The new connectivity will also boost collaborative research into issues facing the Mediterranean - on both shores - such as climate change, desertification and sustainable agriculture to name but a few.

What are MARWAN's main priorities for the next 2-3 years?

We set ourselves the goal of rolling out and increasing the uptake of our service portfolio at the universities and research centres; this includes optimising the HPC capabilities offered by MARWAN through the MaGrid infrastructure and providing cloud services for higher education. Another focus is the improvement of campus networks to enable our universities to fully benefit from the high capacity MARWAN offers.

It won't always be plain sailing, but we are determined to place our researchers and students in the best position to leave a mark - both nationally and internationally.

Find out more at:
www.marwan.ma