

ASI@CONNECT PROJECT ON A ROADSHOW



Catalyzing the support of national stakeholders is crucial for the success of a regional networking project. That is why networking organisation TEIN*CC, who manages the EU-funded Asi@Connect project, has teamed up with partner NRENs across Asia to stage a series of national project launch events in participating beneficiary countries. Building on the impact of similar events during a previous project phase (TEIN2), national project launches provide a unique opportunity to help secure buy-in from local key stakeholders, such as high-level government officials, funding bodies, NREN member institutions, current and prospective network users as well as opinion formers. The overall objective is to introduce the project,

showcase relevance and benefits to the national user communities and society at large and encourage project involvement through participation in call for proposals and in global collaborative R&E projects.

A customised local approach

The event is generally in two parts: a ceremonial session followed by application-based seminars. During the ceremonial part, ministers and local EU Delegation officials deliver congratulatory messages to officially inaugurate the Asi@Connect project at country level. This often amounts to an explicit validation of the role of the NREN in support of R&E communities which is

further stressed by the intervention of a TEIN*CC representative who provides the regional picture and stresses the importance for the country and its researchers to have access to the global R&E network infrastructure. The subsequent seminar session provides an overview of the national R&E scene and looks more closely on ways the NREN can stimulate user engagement and R&E activities through Asi@Connect. To maximise its impact, each event focuses on NREN priorities and applications in a given country. Whilst benefiting from Asi@Connect funding support to stage the launch, partners are not expected to follow a set event model; the format, timing and content are therefore likely to reflect national preferences, resulting in unique local events.

Between June 2017 and November 2018 four national launch events took place:

Sri Lanka

On 20 June 2017, LEARN, the national research and education network of Sri Lanka, opened their national launch event in Colombo with a dance performance and a traditional oil lamp lighting ceremony intended to bring good fortune to Asi@Connect.

Following the ceremonial part, LEARN members took stock of their activities in the fields of medicine, agriculture, engineering and other scientific areas with the aim of developing a more integrated approach.

Pictures

Right (clockwise from top): Participants in launch event in Bangladesh; Panel discussion during Thai launch event; Group picture for launch event in the Philippines. Left: Traditional oil lamp lighting during Sri Lankan launch.



Bangladesh

BdREN, the national research and education network of Bangladesh, hosted the Asi@Connect national event on 1 November 2017 in Dhaka. The International Seminar on "Strategies for Sustainable R&E Networks" set out to articulate BdREN's development strategies, including increased engagement of its members in regional and global programmes. Global partners from NORDUnet (Northern European countries), ThaiREN (Thailand), ASTI (Philippines) and Academia Sinica Grid Computing Center (Chinese Taipei) joined in to share their own key activities, experiences and strategies.

Philippines

The Philippine partner ASTI (Advanced Science and Technology Institute), collocated the national Asi@Connect launch with celebrations for its 30th Anniversary in the first week of December 2017. The event focused primarily on telemedicine and e-learning with user champions, such as Dr. Jefferey Jeromino Domino, pioneer of telemedicine in the Philippines, stressing the importance of ICT and the need for more collaboration.

Thailand

The most recent event was held by the Thai partner, ThaiREN, on 27 November 2018, with high-level dignitaries in attendance.

The programme focused on experiences and lessons learned in R&E networks, recent research developments, new application ideas and collaborations with Asi@Connect participating institutions. From the neighbouring partner countries, NREN representatives and experts from Laos, Bangladesh and Japan joined in the discussions around Asi@Connect collaborative activities.

A regional project with local impact

Following the success of the first 'roadshow', during the course of 2019 further national launches are planned to take place in Vietnam, Pakistan, Bhutan, Cambodia and Myanmar.

It is fair to say that national Asi@Connect launch events, tailored to the R&E priorities, circumstances and aspirations of an individual country, offer a powerful platform to not only promote a regional project and lobby for funding and active participation in it, but to also remind local policy makers, funders and users of the unequivocal role an NREN can play in facilitating collaborative research and education and in contributing to societal and economic development in a country.

Find out more on Asi@Connect at www.tein.asia

"Asi@Connect is an excellent example of regional integration, with the R&E communities of 21 Asia-Pacific countries inter-connected by powerful high-capacity, high quality Internet links. There are unlimited fields of world-class research which can profit from the powerful links we have created together. Sharing data and working together on astronomy, meteorology, climate change monitoring, or early warning in case of natural disasters, are just a few examples."

Ambassador Tuang-Lai Margue, Head of EU Delegation to Sri Lanka and the Maldives

"Today knowledge is not local, whatever knowledge we produce, it is instantly accessible from anywhere in the world. Asia@Connect enables us to jointly produce knowledge in collaboration with other people. Just as a joint perspective, multiple perspectives are required for research."

Prof. Dr. Gowher Rizvi, International Affairs Adviser to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh

"We had a very engaging session and our stakeholders are now aware of the project and are waiting for the next call for proposals to apply. Therefore, we would encourage all Asia@Connect partners to follow suit and stage a national launch event."

Dr Roshan Ragel, CEO of LEARN