

LIFE AT GÉANT

GÉANT is a unique organisation that plays a pivotal role for research and education worldwide. Life at GÉANT is an initiative launched to bring the community closer to the people inside the organisation and share what excites them about their working lives. CONNECT has chosen to feature GÉANT's Licia Florio and Helga Spitaler's employee stories to give you a flavour of this popular initiative and takes the opportunity to celebrate two relevant annual events: the International Day of Women and Girls in Science (11 February) and the International Women's Day (8 March). For more information on Life at GÉANT, visit www.geant.org

Licia Florio, Senior Trust & Identity Manager, Amsterdam



'Flexibility and trust'

Tell us about your role at GÉANT

During my career at GÉANT I have been privileged to take part in a large number of initiatives that make up the current European and global Authentication and Authorisation Infrastructure for Research & Education. Specifically, I work in the area of Trust and Identity (T&I), to support the adoption of federated access in large scale international research collaborations operating in areas such

as life science, earth observation, particle physics, astronomy and arts & humanities. We help users across multiple organisations and countries to access resources, collect research data and handle a variety of access issues specific to each field with one log in identity. Our work on federated access for such collaborations focuses on specific technical aspects, but also requires a certain degree of familiarity with the fields in which these operate, their constraints and how they interact.

What do you enjoy most about working at GÉANT?

I have always worked in the area of T&I and my job has never been monotonous. Through the years, collaborations with different groups have certainly helped me and my colleagues, gain, understand and benefit from different perspectives. I have worked on a wide range of projects - all very different, but equally exciting - that have undoubtedly added elements of variety and challenge to my job.

I work in an international and diverse environment where the different interactions between colleagues create enriching experiences. I really appreciate the high degree of trust and flexibility with which we are all enabled to carry out our job; it makes us all work harder, empowers us to do what we believe in and generates high levels of job satisfaction. I truly enjoy what I do and I am always motivated to do my very best.

About Licia

Licia was born in Italy and holds a Computer Science degree from the University of Bologna. In 2001 she moved to the Netherlands - where she had only intended to spend one year - to work for GÉANT (TERENA at the time). Licia was part of the Task Force that produced the eduroam (federated access to wireless networks) pilot - a service that now counts tens of thousands of hotspots in 101 countries across the world - and has led the AARC project to help research organisations deploy federated access. In 2018 Licia was awarded the prestigious Medal of Honour by the Vietsch Foundation that supports research and development of advanced internet technology for scientific research and higher education.



'Making a difference'

Helga Spitaler, Senior International Engagement Officer, Cambridge

What do you do at GÉANT?

As part of the International Relations team, for over 10 years I have been involved in adapting the GÉANT model to other parts of the world in the context of EU-funded regional networking projects. Specifically, I drive and coordinate the visibility efforts for these projects, including mentoring colleagues to build up PR capacity locally.

I always want to understand the WHY that is behind what we do. I am therefore very keen to demonstrate our impact through the eyes of the actual network users, and in particular the less traditional ones who have a huge societal benefit potential. And I am proud to be involved in the In The Field blog project which depicts such a powerful picture of the difference NRENs make around the world.

Why GÉANT?

Again, it's about making a difference. Like the caretaker at NASA who replied when asked 'What do you do' with 'I am helping put a man on the moon' we should proudly say 'We are helping advance scientific research and make education more accessible'. And it's about the people. I really value the multi-cultural atmosphere here at GÉANT. I work with and learn from amazing colleagues, both in this organisation and in the wider community and have made real friends along the way.

I joined GÉANT (at the time DANTE) in 2004, and I am still stimulated by the diversity and the need to think outside the box, as each region has its own challenges and opportunities. GÉANT also gives me the opportunity to grow. Working with the most experienced project managers has given me invaluable insight into aspects beyond my core activities and I am confident that my journey here at GÉANT is not quite finished yet.

About Helga

Before joining the Research & Education networking world, Helga was an Executive Education Programme Manager at the Judge Business School in Cambridge, following a stint in event management in San Francisco, US, and after 'escaping' the isolation of soundproof simultaneous interpreting booths. Helga hails from Bolzano in Italy and occasionally misses the Dolomite mountains landscapes, but feels very privileged to call Cambridge home.