

VOICE OF THE GÉANT BOARD



Continuing our series of Board member interviews, CONNECT spoke with CEO of Jisc, Paul Feldman, who joined the GÉANT Board in November 2017. Jisc runs the United Kingdom's National Research and Education Network, Janet.

How does the Board reflect the wishes of the GÉANT Membership?

We listen very carefully to the General Assembly (GA) and ensure that our decisions meet the needs of the multiple constituencies that it represents. The NREN member base comprises a variety of country-specific communities with different sizes, history, backgrounds, levels of maturity and very diverse requirements. By adopting an umbrella approach we always endeavour to listen, be attentive and focus on such a multiplicity of needs.

What do you see as the main successes of the Board?

GÉANT is continuously evolving to adapt to the ever-changing European landscape. The Board is following the same process in order to be better positioned to fulfil its mandate, provide strategic direction and foster a successful relationship with the GA. I believe that we are creating the right conditions and balance for all the parties involved to be successful. Our objective is also to provide the right financial parameters to empower and guide the GÉANT executives, so as to enable them to carry out their responsibilities and tasks in the smoothest way possible.

How would you like to see the Board develop in the future?

The Board has a vital part to play to ensure NRENs' needs are understood and met by GÉANT. I believe we should aim to spend less time, resources and energy on minutiae and use

our valuable GÉANT time to refine the strategy, develop risk prevention measures, and define objectives and priorities. We need to keep monitoring the macro environment, act as critical friends, coaches and mentors, create the right challenges, and occasionally play the devil's advocate role.

How do you see Jisc's role in Europe developing, and Jisc's interaction with EU partners and EU science and education?

Jisc's vision is for the UK to be a digitally advanced lifelong learning nation, transformed by technology. Due to the current uncertain times, we cannot predict the role of the UK within the Horizon 2020 programme, but I do expect my country will still be a very strong and reliable partner for research and education in Europe. My intent for Jisc is to continue playing its current role in the European and global NREN community, but the present situation is unfortunately outside our control and we are faced with a considerable number of unknowns. Our focus is on data in teaching, research data management and we also hope to continue participating actively in EOSC open scholarship programmes as a strong and reliable link between UK and EU programmes. There are few NRENs in the world similar to Jisc. We are not just a network, but have a much wider scope: we have become a very broad digital body for higher education and research in the UK. We are developing exciting visions for teaching driven by the industrial revolution 4.0 technologies (which we label Education 4.0), stimulating radical thinking within our member organisations. We will keep developing new services for R&E

and providing advice, guidance and thought leadership to our prestigious universities.

How do you see Jisc's position in the world developing?

We need to share and facilitate the adoption of best practice in universities from around the globe whilst helping to embrace new ways of thinking. Our universities are some of the most advanced in the world, and some of them are starting to expand geographically across borders into other countries and continents. Jisc needs to support them in the successful setting up of new campuses, working with telecom providers, local NRENs and suppliers. For instance, we need to continue providing unmatched connectivity and superlative levels of support to enable them to carry out a growing number of regular virtual sessions with remote campuses and ensure that all students, independently of their location, feel part of a university's global community.

Tell us about yourself

Achieving a good work-life balance has always been one of my objectives. I like to keep myself active playing golf and cycling, I enjoy reading international crime fiction and I am also a self-confessed cinema lover. Travelling is one of my passions too. My latest holiday was probably one of the most memorable of my life; my wife and I went gorilla watching in the Republic of Congo at a camp run by Odzala, a charity that looks to protect the area and reinvest in it. As well as tramping through impenetrable jungle and 'glooping' through waist deep swamp, seeing these amazing creatures and other rare forest animals was an experience second to none.