FOCUS ON CYNET

You may have heard about Cyprus as a popular holiday destination with the most sunny days every year, but Cyprus also has a dynamic research and education sector with 10 major universities, as well as several colleges, research institutions and dynamic innovative companies. Moreover, Cyprus participates in Horizon 2020 with 245 programs, attracting a total funding of €106.65 million. This makes Cyprus the number one participating country in the largest funding program for research and innovation in Europe.

Words
Silvie Francisci,
Partner Relations
Officer, GÉANT

Pictures
Left; Dr. Georgios
Konnis

Right; CyNet
topology

CyNet has been a part of the GÉANT community since 2000 with a current connectivity to GÉANT of 2x2Gbps to London and Frankfurt. In addition, CyNet has been able to secure a connection of 1Gbps to Athens resulting in faster connectivity to Greece. GÉANT's positive response to CyNet's request will benefit CyNet's members, since the majority of their distance learning students are from Greece, and this new connection will definitely minimise traffic latency. Furthermore, CyNet is providing several GÉANT services like eduroam, TCS, FoD, NSHaRP, MD-VPN, Cloud, etc. and is in the process of deploying eduGAIN. CyNet is also a partner in international research projects like EaPConnect and EUMEDCONNECT3.

Investing in dark fibre

In 2017, after the decision of the Republic's Council of Ministers, CyNet received significant funding from the European Structural and Investment Funds in Cyprus, for the implementation of dark fibre in the network in Cyprus. The aim of this project is to connect all CyNet's members (universities and research institutions) to dark fibre.

Specifically, CyNet in collaboration with OCECPR, the Telecoms Regulator in the Republic of Cyprus (2nd partner in the proposal), were selected for the funding with the action '2017-CY-IA-0121: Establishment of Cypriot Academic CSIRT', under the 'Connecting Europe Facility Call for proposals: CEF Telecom Call 2017 CEF-TC-2017-2'. The main objective of the action is the design, installation, configuration/customisation and support of all necessary infrastructure for implementing the Academic CSIRT.

CyNet aims to make the best use of the new circuits and, to this end, it is working on a series of projects, such as the interconnection of schools and hospitals, as well as the development of new services such as telephony.

CyNet, counting only 4 permanent staff, puts a huge amount of work into setting up and leading these activities and is interested in offering more services via the GÉANT network in the future.

AAI Developments

GÉANT is supporting CyNet with eduGAIN training and knowledge transfer and in particular, working with Federation as a Service (FaaS) as part of eduGAIN. CIF (CyNet Identity Federation) is the federation of Cyprus. However, whilst CyNet is a voting-only member of the eduGAIN community and there is no federated access in Cyprus yet, development is in progress. At the moment GRNET is assisting CyNet in deployment of the service. To this end, a first webinar for CyNet's members was organised on 19 April, which was an introduction to the main aspects of the service. This was followed by a hands-on workshop, where our members were trained on how to set up an IdP or SP.
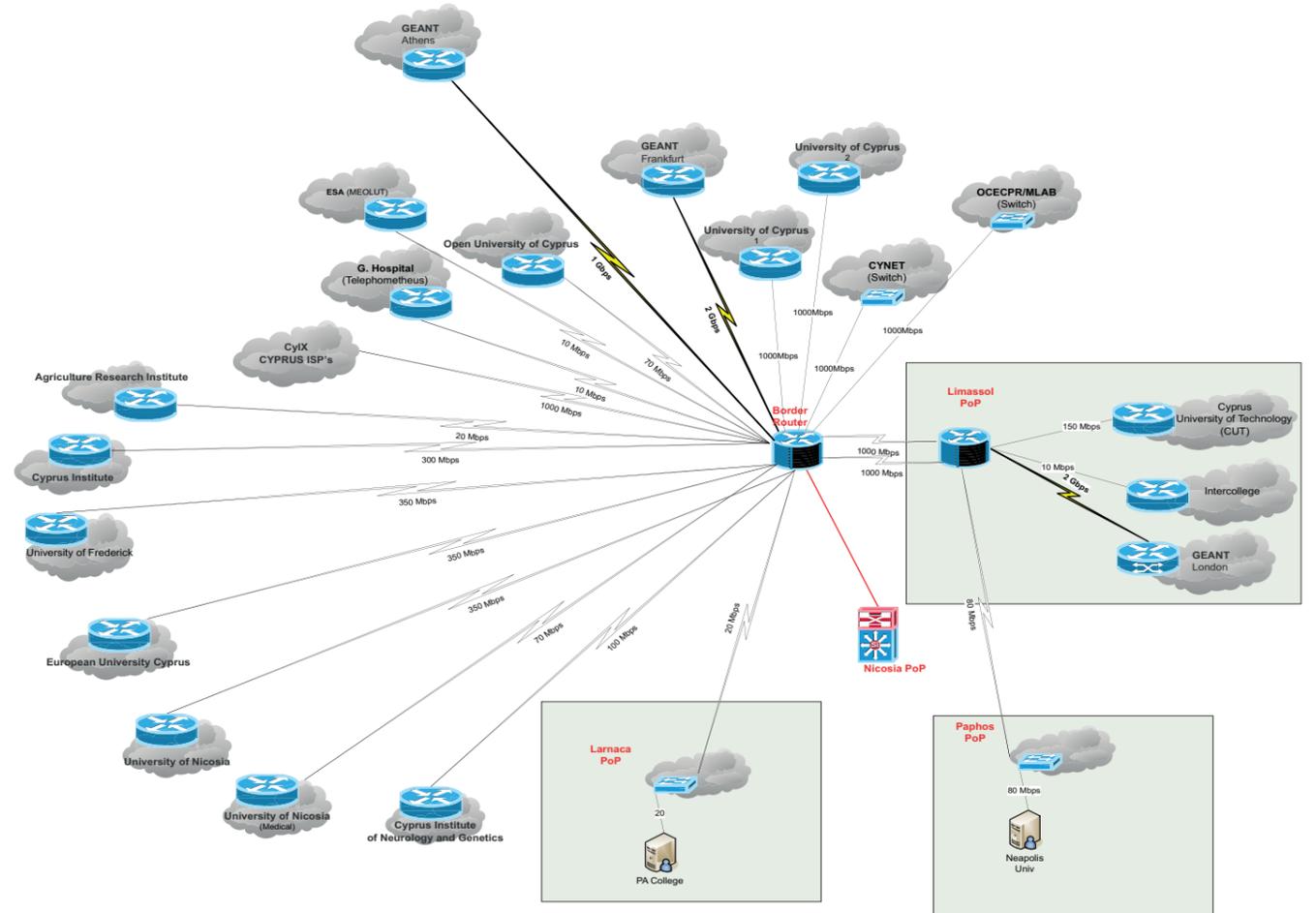
Future Talent to support R&E networking

Last year two CyNet students became part of the inaugural TNC17 Future Talent programme in Linz, Austria. Cypriot students submitted four proposals and two students were selected to participate in TNC17. Rafay Ansari, a Computer Engineering student from Frederick University recognised the mentoring part of the future talent program as very beneficial to him: "I especially liked the mentoring part. I am a Ph.D. student and for my research I have to do a lot of presentations and talks, so this is helping me tremendously."

Exciting new CSIRT developments in Cyprus

In 2010 CyNet was appointed as the Academic CSIRT of Cyprus. While the project did not progress then due to lack of funding, a proposal was submitted in 2017 and funding has been granted through the CEF (Connecting Europe Facility).

Upon completion and as a next step, the action aims at improving the capabilities of the developed Cyprus Academic CSIRT by providing an appropriate connection to the already implemented infrastructures of the other existing CSIRTs in Cyprus (National CSIRT and Governmental CSIRT). CyNet, in its capacity as an NREN, and under the umbrella of GÉANT, aspires to connect to other 'sister' NREN CERT/CSIRT teams. Initially, CyNet will establish a connection with the teams formed by GRNET and FORTH in Greece, and subsequently to more teams from the same network.

Managing Director Dr. Georgios Konnis addressed some questions to give a deeper understanding of CyNet.

As a newly appointed director of CyNet and being in the research and education community for more than 25 years as Research Assistant Professor at NTUA, researcher in universities and private companies and spinoffs in various countries, what are your key areas of focus for CyNet in the next couple of years?

The focus is on the transformation of CyNet into a modern autonomous organisation. Our main objective is to be able to provide all infrastructure and services to the Research and Academic Institutions and thus contribute to the creation of a Springboard of Innovation in the Republic of Cyprus.

What new parts of the Cypriot research and education community would you like to approach and engage with more?

We wish to get more engaged with schools, hospitals and innovative companies carrying out research work and participating in research projects, so as to provide an integrated connection of all research organisations. For example, the Library of the Republic's House of Representatives will soon be connected to our network, in order to provide support to researchers involved in legislative matters.

How would you value the cooperation with GÉANT so far? How can GÉANT support you in your further activities in the research and education community?

Excellent cooperation! CyNet's presence and furtherance is largely based on its participation in GÉANT. GÉANT's response to our needs is immediate and, through the NREN's support program, CyNet has come to expand and upgrade its services. Additionally, the extra resource provided for the IaaS offers CyNet the ability to develop the cloud service. Through GÉANT we have received training not only on know-how issues but also on issues such as business development. Through such a productive cooperation CyNet will definitely progress and expand, and consequently will be more beneficial to its members.

"We are a lean, knowledge-based, forward-looking, dynamic, organisation, strongly committed to enhancing our knowledge and realising our mission to provide integrated connection of all research organisations. With the help of GÉANT we aim to materialise our vision to facilitate and Springboard Innovation in the Republic of Cyprus as a trusted partner of the research and innovation ecosystem and a regional hub."

Dr. Georgios Konnis

For further information, please contact
partner-relations@geant.org