



RESEARCHERS IN BLACK SEA COUNTRIES TO GET ONLINE

High bandwidth network and link to GÉANT2 will enable faster collaboration for South Caucasian researchers and students

Monday 3 March 2008, Ankara, Turkey and Cambridge, UK: The Black Sea Interconnection (BSI) project launched today will build a regional research and education network among South Caucasus countries and link them to GÉANT2, the high bandwidth, pan-European research network. This flagship project is the largest of its kind in the region and will allow Caucasian research communities to participate effectively in joint research and educational activities with the rest of Europe. The European Commission provides €1.4 million funding for the BSI project within 7th Framework Programme for R&D.

The BSI project will bridge the digital divide between the South Caucasian National Research and Education Networks, namely GRENA (Georgia), AzRENA (Azerbaijan), NAS RA (Armenia), and Europe by establishing a high-speed backbone network in the South Caucasus region and connecting it to the pan-European GÉANT2 network.

The Turkish National Research and Education Network, TÜBİTAK-ULAKBİM, co-ordinates the Black Sea Interconnection venture – this being a flagship project and the largest project coordinated by Turkey in the Framework Programme.

"Building on the excellent results achieved in South-Eastern Europe, the BSI project aims at reducing the digital divide between the countries surrounding the Black Sea and Europe," said Viviane Reding, EU Commissioner for Information Society and Media. "Our support to research network infrastructures not only facilitates cooperation of scientists on a global scale but also provides access to modern online services which have significant impact on sectors like medicine, education and meteorology. These are tangible benefits for both researchers and the whole population."

Interconnecting the Southern Caucasus via a regional backbone network and providing a high-speed link to GÉANT2 and Europe enables the introduction of new services to the region and is an important step towards the integration of the Caucasian scientific potential with the Europe and the rest of the world. This will bridge the digital divide between the South Caucasus countries and Europe, enabling greater collaboration on scientific projects all around the world.

The Black Sea Interconnection represents an invaluable opportunity to realize the objectives of Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). It will help BSEC to concentrate directions of regional scientific and technological collaboration, sharing best practices, undertaking joint projects of common interest to all member states and stipulating cooperation among the BSEC Member States and with other organizations, in particular with the EU via the advanced GÉANT2 network.

"The Black Sea Interconnection is not only integrating and linking the research and education communities in the Southern Caucasus with Europe, but also functions as a role model to extend the scope of its achievements across the whole Black Sea Region to Central Asia by introducing substantial interregional elements," said Prof. Dr. Cem Saraç, Director of TÜBİTAK-ULAKBİM "This transforms the former "Silk Route" into a modern "e-Silk Route" by realizing a network endowed by high capacity connections. "

The Black Sea Interconnection project runs for 24-months from 1 March 2008 onwards. The regional network and the connection to GÉANT2 is planned to be operational later in 2008.

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About TÜBİTAK-ULAKBİM:

TÜBİTAK ULAKBİM operates the National Research and Education Network of Turkey (ULAKNET) which provides network connectivity to academic and research communities in Turkey. ULAKNET has been connecting about 90,000 academic personnel and more than 2 million university students to each other and to other NRENs in the world. ULAKNET is trying to interconnect all end users with the highest possible capacities within the available technology over a 1 Gbps backbone and has an STM-4 connection to the European Academic Network GÉANT2, which will be upgraded to 5 Gbps by mid 2008. Over ULAKNET, ULAKBİM leads and coordinates the activities of independent research communities in parallel processing in Turkey within the TR-Grid National Initiative as well as being a member of EC funded projects like EGEE and SEE-GRID. ULAKBİM also leads the research and development activities in the field of information technologies on a national scale through Ulak-CSIRT in network security and IPv6 Task Force.

For more information, visit www.ulakbim.gov.tr/eng

About GÉANT2:

GÉANT2 is an advanced pan-European backbone network that interconnects National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) across Europe. With an estimated 30 million research and education users in 34 countries across the continent connected via the NRENs, GÉANT2 offers unrivalled geographical coverage, high bandwidth, innovative hybrid networking technology and a range of user-focused services, making it the most advanced international network in the world. Together with the NRENs it connects, GÉANT2 has links totalling more than 50,000km in length and its extensive geographical reach interconnects networks in other world regions to enable global research collaboration. Europe's academics and researchers can exploit dedicated GÉANT2 point-to-point links, creating optical private networks that connect specific research centres.

GÉANT2 is co-funded by the European Commission under the EU's Sixth Research and Development Framework Programme. The project partners are 30 European National Research and Education Networks (NRENs), TERENA and DANTE. GÉANT2 is operated by DANTE on behalf of Europe's NRENs. For more information, visit www.geant2.net