



PRESS RELEASE

High-speed Internet network for research cooperation in the Eastern Partnership countries announced

EU awards 13M Euro to EaPConnect project to enable researchers and students in the European Union's Eastern Neighbourhood to fully participate in the digital economy

11th June 2015, Luxembourg: The European Commission has signed today a 13M Euro contract with networking organisation GÉANT to expand connectivity in the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries. The project aims at creating a regional high-speed Internet network dedicated to research and education (R&E) across Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. It will interconnect the National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) in the EaP partner countries and integrate them in the pan-European GÉANT network.

Two million scientists, academics and students at over 700 institutions across the region will benefit from the connectivity boost. This high-speed broadband network will enable access and exchange between scientific databases and facilitate international cooperation via faster data transfer. In addition, EaPConnect will promote increased coverage of wifi access for student and researchers.

At the Eastern Partnership Vilnius Summit in 2013 the Heads of State and Government of the EU Member States and the six EaP countries had encouraged the setting up of a Common Knowledge and Innovation Space. At the recent Summit in Riga on 22 May they also recognised the digital economy as an area with yet untapped potential for both the EU and the partners. EaPConnect will provide a regional gateway to the R&E community to pursue these goals.

"The EU has a vision for global collaboration to bridge the digital divide," said Gerhard Schumann-Hitzler, Director at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR). *"The EaPConnect project is a central part of this strategy which is fully shared by partner countries. It reflects our joint will to increase collaboration in the field of research and education in view of closer links between people and businesses."*

"Today's research community needs to be truly global if it is to solve the challenges humanity faces", said Pierre Bruyère, Chairman of GÉANT Board of Directors. *"The creation of the EaPConnect network is a natural progression into fostering worldwide collaboration in research and education."*

By enabling fast and reliable exchange of high volumes of data between scientists in the EaP countries and their peers in Europe and further afield, EaPConnect will facilitate collaborative

research in areas such as environmental monitoring, telemedicine, life sciences and physics. In addition, stable videoconferencing will support e-learning initiatives or simply enable artists, thousands of miles apart, to perform together in near-real time.

EaPConnect is expected to run for 5 years and will be managed by networking organisation GÉANT in collaboration with the NRENs in the six partner countries. The European Commission provides 95% of the project costs. The remaining 5% will be raised by GÉANT from the EaP countries.

About GÉANT:

GÉANT is Europe's leading collaboration on network and related infrastructure and services for the benefit of research and education, contributing to Europe's economic growth and competitiveness. The organisation develops, delivers and promotes advanced network and associated e-infrastructure services, and supports innovation and knowledge-sharing amongst its members, partners and the wider research and education networking community. It is owned by its core membership of 36 European national research and education network (NREN) organisations and NORDUnet, which participates on behalf of five Nordic NRENs. Associates include commercial organisations and multi-national research infrastructures and projects.

GÉANT manages research and education (R&E) networking projects serving Europe, the Mediterranean, Africa, Central Asia and the Eastern Partnership countries. In addition, GÉANT supports R&E networking organisations in Latin America (RedCLARA), Caribbean (CKLN) and Asia-Pacific (TEIN*CC).

About EaPConnect:

The Eastern Partnership Connect (EaPConnect) project sets out to create a regional research and education (R&E) network in Eastern Europe and the Southern Caucasus. This will interconnect the national R&E networks (NRENs) in six Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries and integrate them into the pan-European GÉANT network. The partner countries are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The overall objective of EaPConnect is to decrease the digital divide, improve intra-regional connectivity and facilitate participation of local scientists, students and academics in global R&E collaborations.

By interconnecting the R&E communities across the region and with their European counterparts, EaPConnect will create a gateway for talented individuals in the EaP countries to be truly global players. EaPConnect is managed by networking organisation GÉANT in collaboration with the NRENs in the six partner countries. The European Commission is contributing 95% (€13m) towards the cost of the EaPConnect project. For more information please visit www.eapconnect.eu

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