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Abstract

This Milestone reports on GÉANT2's involvement at the World Summit on the Information Society which took place in Tunis in November 2005.

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0 Executive Summary

The second phase of the UN-sponsored World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) took place in Tunis from 16-18 November 2005. The objective of this multi-stakeholder forum was to advance international efforts to harness ICT as a tool for development and to promote an inclusive Information Society. The Tunis event followed up on the first phase of the WSIS which took place in Geneva in December 2004.

As an active contributor to the WSIS process, the European Commission invited GÉANT2 to participate in selected events in Tunis to showcase the global dimension of European research networking and its contribution towards digital inclusion.

Commissioner Viviane Reding's plenary speech on 16 November featured references to the global dimension of GÉANT2.

GÉANT2 was the subject of a parallel workshop entitled "Worldwide networking for research and education - extending the reach of GÉANT" which was convened by the European Commission to take stock of the EU's achievements in developing global connectivity, and thus in bridging the digital divide. In line with the recently adopted 'EU Strategy for Africa', the European Commission indicated a strong interest in supporting connectivity initiatives in Africa.

Furthermore, GÉANT2 was represented alongside other EU-funded regional research networking projects (ALICE, EUMEDCONNECT, TEIN2, SPONGE and SEREEN) at the EU Pavilion during the 'ICT 4 All' Exhibition which complemented the Summit. A poster and a video to provide visual support to the development of global research networking were produced and the joint stand presence of the six projects was coordinated, at the request of the European Commission, by DANTE on behalf of GÉANT2.

In line with its commitment towards the objectives of WSIS, the European Commission's presentation of its combined portfolio of research networking projects in Tunis was designed to validate its strategy for developing global research networking, by exporting a working model to other regions in the world.

As a result of its exposure in Tunis, GÉANT2 achieved enhanced awareness and improved knowledge of pan-European research and education networking and its global interconnections.

Both the workshop and the participation in the exhibition were fruitful, validating further the GÉANT2 success story.

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1 Introduction

In response to the perceived need for international agreement on issues relating to the emerging global 'information society', over 20,000 delegates gathered in Tunis during 16-18 November 2005 for the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), to grapple with the question of Internet governance, and to identify tools to bridge the digital divide. The Tunis Summit focussed on the follow-up and implementation of the Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action adopted during the first phase of the WSIS process in Geneva in December 2004, which set the stage for international collaboration to build an inclusive information society.

Sponsored by the United Nations, the Summit featured plenary sessions with country representatives, the private sector, and civil society, in addition to a multitude of panels and workshops covering everything from the specific experiences of individual countries with information technologies to debates on improving Internet access across the globe. The Summit was complemented by the 'ICT 4 ALL' exhibition which took place from 14-19 November, involving representatives from major technology and communications companies, national governments, and non-governmental organisations.

As an active contributor to the WSIS process, the European Commission selected GÉANT2 together with other EU-funded regional research networks (ALICE, EUMEDCONNECT, TEIN2, SEEREN2, and SPONGE) to participate in the WSIS Summit. By presenting the combined portfolio of EU-funded networking projects, the European Commission intended to demonstrate the global dimension of European research networking and its contribution towards bridging the digital divide. DANTE was invited by the European Commission to coordinate the participation of the six projects on behalf of GÉANT2.

As the world's most advanced international research and education network, GÉANT2 was represented at the WSIS in Tunis in the following ways:

- During the Plenary Session: references to the global reach of GÉANT2 during Commissioner Reding's speech on 16 November 2005 (available in French from the following website: http://europa.eu.int/information_society/activities/internationalrel/global_issues/wsis/index_en.htm).
- At a workshop entitled 'Worldwide networking for research and education - Extending the reach of GÉANT' which was convened by the European Commission on 17 November 2005. The workshop was designed to further validate the European Commission's strategy in expanding global connectivity by supporting the establishment of regional backbones and their interconnections to GÉANT2.

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- During the 'ICT 4 All' exhibition, 15-19 November 2005: joint stand presence with the EU-funded regional networks ALICE, EUMEDCONNECT, TEIN2, SEEREN2, and SPONGE to showcase the global dimension of European research networking. DANTE was invited by the European Commission to coordinate the combined representation of the six projects, on behalf of GÉANT2.

The joint involvement of the networking projects in the events in Tunis was designed to reinforce the European Commission's commitment towards the objectives of the WSIS and the ITU 'Connect the World' Initiative (<http://www.itu.int/partners/index.html>) which aims at 'connecting the unconnected' by 2015.

As a result of its participation in the Tunis events, GÉANT2 got high-profile exposure, achieving enhanced awareness.

The following section summarises the objectives of the combined presentation of EU-funded research and education networking projects and provides an overview of the target audiences of the events listed above.

1.1 Objectives of Participation

Key objectives of the combined presentation of EU-funded research networking projects were as follows:

- To reinforce the European Commission's commitment towards the objectives of the WSIS.
- To validate the European Commission's strategy for promoting a global perspective on research networking.
- To demonstrate the proactive stance of the European Commission within the context of the ITU multi-stakeholder 'Connect the World' initiative.
- To disseminate EU policies regarding research and education networks.
- To validate a success story based on international cooperation initiatives.
- To raise awareness of the potential of international research networking.
- To make other regions aware of GÉANT2 and related initiatives in Europe (SEEREN2, SPONGE) and in other world regions (ALICE, EUMEDCONNECT and TEIN2).
- To underline the need for future funding of these initiatives to ensure continuity and ultimately sustainability.
- To initiate discussions with research networking representatives of other regions to identify requirements and opportunities for actions.
- To foster world-wide cooperation by involving relevant stakeholders to fight the digital divide.

- To provide reasons to be part of the success.
- To attract requests for interconnection from other regions.

1.2 Target Audiences

1.2.1 Target Audience – Commissioner Reding’s Plenary Speech

- Accredited representatives of governments and international organisation
- EU politicians and decision-makers
- Media

1.2.2 Target Audience – Workshop

- Representatives of National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) across the world
- Representatives of EU-funded networking projects
- Representatives of academic and research institutions across the world (in particular, from South-Eastern Africa)
- African ICT ministerial officials
- EU politicians and decision-makers
- Media

1.2.3 Target Audience – Exhibition

- Representatives of National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) across the world
- Representatives of EU-funded networking projects
- Representatives of academic and research institutions across the world
- EU politicians and decision-makers (including MEPs and Commissioner Reding)

- Official country delegations
- General public
- Media

The following chapters will deal in more detail with the participation of GÉANT2 and the other projects in the workshop and the exhibition, in whose organisation DANTE, on behalf of GÉANT2, had significant involvement.

2 Workshop on the Global Reach of GÉANT

To take stock of the achievements of the European Union's strategy for digital inclusion and to provide an impetus for reinforced cooperation amongst regions across the globe, DG INFSO of the European Commission convened a workshop on 'Worldwide Networking for Research and Education: Extending the Reach of GÉANT' as a parallel WSIS event on 17 November 2005. The workshop followed a number of conferences and workshops across the world (Philadelphia¹, Geneva², Tunis³) which focused on the benefits of research and education networking and, specifically, on the provision of connectivity to Africa.

2.1 Agenda and Discussion

The workshop was opened by Commissioner Viviane Reding who defined network connectivity as a key enabler for research and education. She emphasised the crucial role of GÉANT2 in fostering collaboration between researchers across the world, in facilitating the creation of pools of local and regional expertise, and thus in fighting brain drain and digital divide. The Commissioner outlined the European Commission's vision for global research networking by combining its research funds with EU funds earmarked for international cooperation and aid for development. She recognised the success of the EUMEDCONNECT and ALICE projects, which have already deployed regional networks in the Mediterranean rim and Latin America respectively and established interconnections with GÉANT2, setting the scene for future initiatives in developing regions; Commissioner Reding announced the extension of both projects until mid 2007 and the start of the development phase of the TEIN2 initiative.

Following Commissioner Reding's speech, David West, EUMEDCONNECT and TEIN2 Project Manager and representative of GÉANT2, provided an overview of the GÉANT2 project and its benefits for Europe's research

¹ Workshop entitled 'Progress and Challenges in Building National Research and Education Networks in Africa : A View from the Field' held during the Internet2 Fall Meeting in Philadelphia on 18 September 2005

(<http://events.internet2.edu/2005/fall-mm/sessionDetails.cfm?session=2322&event=239>)

² International Workshop on African Research & Education Networking, 25-27 September 2005, CERN, Geneva

(<http://event-africa-networking.web.cern.ch/event-africa-networking/default.html>)

³ Conference on African Research and Education Networking Infrastructure, 14-15 November 2005, Tunis

and education community; he reinforced the success of the European Commission's strategy for contributing towards global connectivity by outlining the global dimension of GÉANT2.

In short statements, representatives of SEEREN2, EUMEDCONNECT, ALICE, TEIN2 and TENET highlighted the benefits produced by the establishment of regional backbones and their interconnection with GÉANT2.

In line with the recently adopted 'EU Strategy for Africa', which suggests a framework for action to support Africa's efforts to attain the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Commissioner Reding confirmed the Commission's interest in supporting further research networking connectivity programmes at continental level to promote digital inclusion of African universities and research institutes.

The workshop also saw the joining together of representatives of African Universities who announced the imminent creation of the UbuntuNet Alliance to support research and education networking in the eastern and southern regions of Africa. The mission of UbuntuNet is to establish a regional backbone and provide affordable intra-regional and international connectivity. A particular boost to the initiative is expected to come from South Africa which is already connected to GÉANT2. The Alliance has the backing of several donors and is understood to be requesting EU support for its plans (e.g. in conducting a feasibility study).

The workshop closed with a panel discussion in which the importance of extending the global reach of GÉANT2, by establishing regional backbones and linking them to GÉANT2, was clearly recognised.

Due to problems with the sound system, it was not possible to show a short video containing excerpts of interviews with project partners at the beginning of the workshop, as originally planned. On leaving, attendees were given a goody bag with brochures, pens and a GÉANT2 mug.

The Workshop Agenda is available in Appendix A.

2.2 Outcome

At the last minute the organisers moved the workshop location from the exhibition area to a meeting room in the summit area and its start time was altered from 11h00 to 09h00. This inevitably created significant organisational problems, and with 25 participants, attendance therefore turned out to be lower than originally expected. The workshop was further challenged by technical hitches and poor acoustic conditions in the meeting room. Despite these venue-related problems, discussions were fruitful and, overall, the feedback was very positive.

To summarise, the workshop recognised the following:

- As the most advanced international research and education network, GÉANT2 is becoming increasingly attractive to researchers around the world.
- Extending the geographical reach of GÉANT2 within the context of international cooperation initiatives is a central part of the European Commission's 'Connect the World' vision.

- The European Commission has a coherent strategy for promoting a global perspective on research networking, by exporting a working model.
- Establishing regional backbones is the way forward in helping connect developing regions. Future initiatives can build on the success ably demonstrated by projects such as ALICE in Latin America and EUMEDCONNECT in North Africa and the Middle East.
- The European Commission is committed to supporting connectivity programmes in Africa.

The positive feedback from representatives of regional research networks benefiting from the interconnection with GÉANT2 and the enthusiasm voiced by aspiring project partners, served to emphasise the success of the Commission's vision and to further validate the 'GÉANT2 success story'.

The workshop was mentioned in the following online articles:

<http://www.mybroadband.co.za/nepnp/?m=show&id=1236>

<http://www.eumedis.net/en/news/id/320>

<http://www.itu.int/wsis/tunis/newsroom/highlights/16nov.html>

<http://www.geant2.net/server/show/conWebDoc.1569>

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3 ICT 4 All Exhibition

The ICT 4 All Exhibition complemented the political agenda of the Summit and was held in a hall adjacent to the Summit area from 15-19 November 2005. It featured a lively exhibition and interactive workshops around issues related to an inclusive, global information society, showcasing over 500 ICT projects and attracting 70,000 visitors (please see <http://www.expo.ict4all-tunis.org/>).

DG INFSO was entrusted with the organisation of the logistical aspects of the EU’s participation in the ICT 4 All Exhibition. The European Union Pavilion accommodated a total of 10 projects funded by DG INFSO (Directorate General Information Society and Media) and DG DEV (Directorate-General Development). The participating projects were selected by the Commission based on their contribution to a more effective use and spread of ICT worldwide. GÉANT2 and the regional research networking projects ALICE, EUMEDCONNECT, TEIN2, SEEREN2, and SPONGE were selected to showcase the global reach of European research networking and to illustrate the contribution of the projects towards bridging the digital divide.

3.1 “The Global Reach of European Research Networking” Booth

On behalf of the European Commission, DANTE co-ordinated arrangements for the ‘Global Reach of European Research Networking’ booth on the European Union Pavilion, which showcased the development of global research networking connectivity in the form of the ALICE, EUMEDCONNECT, GÉANT2, SEEREN2, SPONGE and TEIN2 projects..

The following coordination activities were undertaken:

- Liaison with the DG INFSO Pavilion Coordinator to determine size, position, layout and audio-visual requirements of the stand.
- Liaison with local providers (freight forwarder, insurance company, AV providers etc).

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- Conception and production of stand exhibits, brochures, give-aways and videos.
- Overall responsibility for stand presence, staff rota, and supervision of build up and break down.

The booth consisted of an information desk with PC and Internet access which enabled stand personnel to demonstrate project websites. Literature and give-aways were displayed on the desk and on a brochure rack. A plasma screen was hired to show the GÉANT2 video, the ALICE T@lemed video, and also a specially-prepared video on the global dimension of GÉANT2. An exhibition poster featuring the global reach of European research networking was also specially developed and prominently displayed.

3.1.1 Exhibition Poster

On behalf of the European Commission, DANTE coordinated the design and production of an exhibition poster which was intended to showcase the development of global research networking. The poster was to give visibility to the following EC funded networking projects:

- GÉANT2 (Europe)
- ALICE (Latin America)
- EUMEDCONNECT (North Africa and Middle East)
- TEIN2 (Asia-Pacific)
- SEEREN2 (South-East Europe)
- SPONGE (Central-Asia and Caucasus)

The A0-sized poster featured a world map on which each project was clearly identified by using the respective logo and by colour-coding participating countries. Connections from the regional networks to the GÉANT2 network, and GÉANT2's planned links to India and China, were depicted.

Located at the centre of the poster, the globe was surrounded by topology maps of each single project, displaying connection speeds and types of links that operate between the countries participating in a project. The association of a project on the globe with the relevant topology map was facilitated by replicating the same colour scheme. A lot of effort went into the collation of connection information and the design of topology maps for projects not directly managed by DANTE, i.e. SEEREN2 and SPONGE.

Since the poster was produced on behalf of the European Commission, the logos of DG INFSO and the European Union were prominently displayed. Other creative ways, including the title 'The Global Reach of European Research Networking', were applied to convey the EU association and branding message.

In addition to the general objectives of the stand presence outlined in section 1.2.3, the poster was intended:

- To successfully convey positive images about the European Commission as sponsor" of these initiatives.

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- To provide visual support to the core message: the European Commission's research and education networking strategy, is a success story with increasing attractiveness in other parts of the world.

An electronic version of the poster is available in Appendix B.

3.1.2 Videos

In addition to the exhibition poster, visual support to the global dimension of European research networking was provided by showing selected videos.

In preparation for the WSIS, an 8 minute video was produced with statements from representatives of ALICE, EUMEDCONNECT, TEIN2, CERNET and TENET on the benefits of the interconnection to GÉANT2. The video also included excerpts of interviews with Dai Davies, Managing Director of DANTE, who provided background information to the project and the development of global connectivity, and with Commissioner Viviane Reding, who underlined the crucial role of GÉANT2 for the competitiveness of European research.

The global connectivity video was alternated with another DVD, first shown at the GÉANT2 Launch in Luxembourg, in which GÉANT2 was introduced in the words of users and politicians.

The ALICE-T@lented video was also shown.

3.1.3 Literature and Merchandise

The following brochures were displayed and handed out at the stand:

- GÉANT2 brochure
- ALICE brochure
- EUMEDCONNECT leaflet
- TEIN2 leaflet
- SEEREN2 leaflet (produced by GRNet)
- Works of DANTE Newsletter (Autumn 2005 edition featuring a guest editorial from Commissioner Reding)
- DANTE Annual Report 2004
- eInfrastructure brochure (produced by DG INFSO)
- SEEREN2 leaflet

The following merchandise was handed out:

- GÉANT2 branded mugs, mouse mats, pens, post-its
- ALICE branded mouse mats, pens, post-its
- EUMEDCONNECT branded post-its

During VIP tours at the stand, the above items were included and handed out in a GÉANT2/DANTE branded carrier bag.

3.1.4 Stand Manning

The stand was manned by staff from DANTE, GRNET (SEEREN2), the Tunisian NREN and DG INFSO.

3.2 Attendance

The 'Global Reach of European Research Networking' stand attracted many visitors during the five-day exhibition. Various national delegations stopped by to learn about GÉANT2 and its global dimension. The stand personnel informed visitors about the capabilities and scope of GÉANT2 and the regional backbones.

Potential users who queried whether they were entitled to use the regional networks were generally referred to the NRENs in their respective countries. A strong interest in GÉANT2 was also shown by other projects exhibiting on the EU Pavilion.

The stand was also visited by Commissioner Viviane Reding and a delegation of Members of the European Parliament.

The booth drew many Tunisian visitors who were keen to find out more about the potential of EUMEDCONNECT. Contact details of the Tunisian NREN were provided.

3.3 Feedback

Feedback from various sources indicated that the stand presence achieved the objectives set. With its focused profile and carefully targeted audience, the exhibition offered an effective two-way communication process: visitors could question, challenge and debate. Exhibitors could give and seek information. It helped validate the 'connect the world' strategy of the European Commission and achieved valuable exposure for GÉANT2 to an important and influential audience.

The stand presence got the following online coverage:

www.geant2.net/server/show/conWebDoc.1569

<http://www.eumedis.net/en/news/id/320>

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4 Conclusions

The WSIS events were an effective communication and awareness-building platform for GÉANT2 and the other EU-funded regional networking projects. Their involvement and active participation in a workshop and exhibition focussing on the global reach of European research networking clearly demonstrated that the European Commission has a coherent strategy for developing global connectivity, by exporting a working model to other regions in the world. To ensure continuity, the need to guarantee future funding of these regional initiatives was underlined.

In line with the 'EU Strategy for Africa', during the workshop on 'Worldwide Networking for Research and Networking: Extending the Reach of GÉANT' the European Commission indicated a strong interest in supporting connectivity initiatives in Africa. Follow-up activities to define requirements and determine their feasibility are in the process of being initiated by the European Commission.

GÉANT2's exposure in Tunis contributed to an improved knowledge and awareness of pan-European research and education networking and its global connections amongst delegates from around the world.

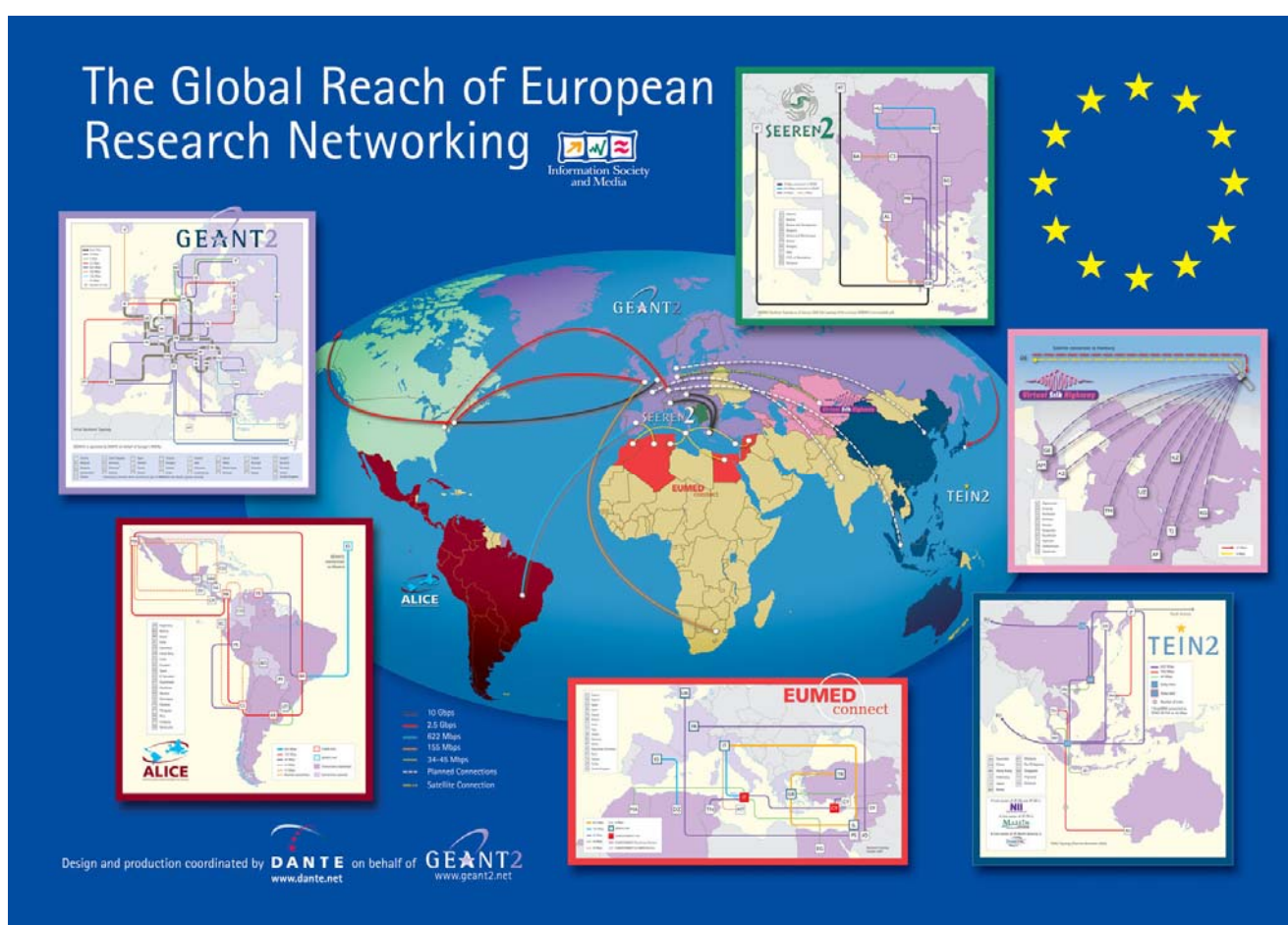
Both the workshop and the participation in the exhibition were fruitful, validating further the GÉANT2 success story.

Appendix A GÉANT2 Workshop Agenda

Workshop “Worldwide Networking for Research and Education: Extending the reach of GÉANT” World Summit on the Information Society – KRAM PALEXPO - Tunis 17 th November 2005 09:00 to-11.00 am Convened by the European Commission			
WHAT IS DONE (current initiatives)	10.00	Introductory remarks by the Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Director Ulf Dahlsten
	10.05	Welcome and Opening Statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ EU Commissioner Viviane Reding
	10.15	GÉANT2 in Europe GÉANT2 in the Balkans GÉANT2 in the World: ALICE EUMEDCONNECT TEIN2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ David West, Project Manager DANTE + video ▪ Tryfon Chiotis, Technical Director of GRNET ▪ Florencio Utreras, Executive Director of CLARA ▪ David West, Project Manager DANTE
WHAT TO DO (Requirements for future initiatives)	10.40	Reports from previous workshops: CERN International Workshop on African R&E Networking (25-27/09/2005) AAU Conference on African Research and Education Networking Infrastructure (14-15/11/05) Internet 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Past, Present and Future of Research in the Information Society Conference – NRENs in developing countries (13/11/05) ▪ Progress and Challenges in Building National Research and Education Networks In Africa : A View from the Field (18/09/05) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hans Falk Hoffmann, CERN ▪ Pascal Hoba, Head of Communications and Services / Association of African Universities ▪ Heather Boyles, Director of International Relations of Internet 2
	10.55	Discussion Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stefano Manservigi, Director General EC- DG Development ▪ Malcolm Harbour, Member of the European Parliament ▪ Duncan Martin, Chief Executive Officer TENET/South Africa National Research and Education Network) ▪ Américo Muchanga, CIUEM Informatic Center of the University Eduardo Mondlane Mozambique
HOW TO DO IT (Requirements for future initiatives)	11.30	Closing	

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Appendix B Exhibition Poster



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