ASREN

Arab States Research and Education Network

ASREN *Newsletter*
December 2017, Issue 21

In this issue

Abu-Ghazaleh Chairs ASREN Shareholders' Annual Meeting

CAIRO- HE Dr. Talal Abu-Ghazaleh headed the annual meeting of the shareholders of the Arab States Research and Education Network (ASREN) at the League of Arab States in Cairo.

He expressed his appreciation to HE Ahmed Aboul-Gheit for patronizing the 7th e-AGE and the 9th AROQA Annual Conference. He also expressed his appreciation to the Department of Education and Scientific Research at the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States and to the Egyptian Universities Network for host and support.

Abu-Ghazaleh approved ASREN's financial statement of 2016 and its operational plan of 2018, which

emphasized on the development of pan Arab research and education network. It also emphasized on the importance of services and applications to research and education communities, including Eduroam, EduGain, Science Gateway, and Identity Federation platforms for seamless access to repositories, computing facilities, and services, worldwide.

It was decided follow on the recommendations of e-AGE which emphasize on the integration of Arab e-infrastructures and connection with Europe, the United States, Latin America and Africa through ASREN's exchange point in London as well as on contributing to the establishment of national research and education networks in Kuwait, Iraq, Bahrain, Yemen, Libya, Djibouti and Comoros, as well as to continue to support research networks and infrastructure development in Arab countries.

The shareholders' meeting approved that a legal mechanism needs to be developed to facilitate the joining of national research and education networks in the Arab countries to the Arab States Research and Education Network as members of Board of Trustees instead of joining as shareholders. The current shareholders will be the founding members.

The shareholders' meeting emphasized on the importance to build on the success of the EUMEDCONNECT and AFRICACONNECT and other European funded projects to enhance collaboration between Arab and European scientists as promote the development of research that focuses on the use of e-Infrastructures.

It was also decided to hold e-AGE 2018 in December 2018 and the location will be decided later.

ASREN Holds Workshop on Computer Security Incident Response Team (CSIRT)

CAIRO- The Arab States Research and Education Network (ASREN), headed by its Chairman HE Dr. Talal Abu-Ghazaleh, held a specialized workshop on "Computer Security Incident Response Team (CSIRT)" with the attendance of 15 representatives of scientific research networks and universities in Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan.

The workshop took place at Cairo, Egypt, December 5-6, 2017, targeting new or potential CSIRT personnel who wish to gain a solid understanding of the main aspects of working in an incident handling and response team. It offered experience and expertise in Operational, Organizational, Legal and Technical areas, which form knowledge basis for CSIRT personnel.

The workshop offered the participants a unique opportunity to mix with their peers and discuss security issues in a secured and trusted environment, whilst being tutored by seasoned experts of the European CSIRT community. The course was opened to individuals working for a CSIRT or network security related organization, and those with bona-fide interest in establishing a CSIRT.

The CONNECT Interview: Yousef Torman the Managing Director of ASREN

CONNECT is the magazine from the GÉANT community, providing an update on the networks, services and innovation activities that empower their research and education users.

The latest issue features an interview with Yousef Torman the Managing Director of the Arab States Research and Education Network.

Yousef Torman, You are a passionate advocate of R&E networking across the Arab world. What fuels this passion?

In 1989, when I started as Head of the Computer Center of Jordan University of Science and Technology, we had a few centralised VMS servers with some scientific applications on top. We had a local area network, but no internet. All user accounts had capped storage and CPU time. Students and researchers would ask for extra capacity for their computation and analysis, and I would take great satisfaction out of helping them. I was also approached by other universities which used to access our servers via modem dial-up, but most of the time they would just come to my office to connect as the dial-up service was simply too expensive.

Well, I wanted to enable, connect, provide access! This led me in 1992 to initiate a proposal to connect all public universities in Jordan. Five universities got on board and we connected them

using the optical fibre network of the Royal Air Forces of Jordan. Mind you, that was probably one of the first NRENs in the world!

In 2003, the Jordanian Government launched the National Broadband Network to serve public institutions. I was put in charge of the Universities component and we established the Jordanian Universities Network (JUNet), a dedicated fibre backbone connecting 11 public universities and over 20 other sites, including community colleges, hospitals and research centers. Via JUNet I participated in various EU-funded projects, such as EUMEDCONNECT, EUMEDGRID, LinkSCEEM and EPIKH. This was instrumental for me in shaping the vision and strategy for JUNet to provide services to the research community and encourage our scientists to get involved in national and regional collaborations. And, most importantly, these projects provided a platform to meet other Arab NREN representatives and explore common ground. Now, with ASREN, we also have an organisational framework to pursue the development of R&E networking in the Arab world.

What is ASREN's background and mission?

ASREN came about after several iterations between 2005 and 2011 to form a regional R&E network for the Arab region. Key contributions came from the EUMEDCONNECT project, which helped us incubate ASREN, and from His Excellency Dr. Talal Abu Ghazaleh, founder and leader of the TAG group and passionately interested in scientific and educational development in the Arab world. With his backing the Arab States Research and Education Network (ASREN) was established under the umbrella of the League of Arab States. ASREN's mission is to boost scientific research and cooperation in member countries across the Arab region through the provision of world-class e-infrastructures and services and to support Arab NRENs along the way. ASREN is now an active regional partner for the North African component of the AfricaConnect2 project and for EUMEDCONNECT which continues to serve the Eastern Mediterranean countries, as well as participating in network service and science gateway initiatives across the region.

What are the main challenges and key achievements of developing R&E networking in the Arab region?

The Arab region has certainly had its share of challenges. While we have seen increased capacities and some lowering of connectivity prices, market competition is still relatively weak and this has held back the development of a proper regional R&E network. National funding support for Arab NRENs was also set back following the Arab Spring, but things are steadily recovering and I am proud about the part ASREN is playing to bring this about. I am particularly pleased that, as part of EUMEDCONNECT, ASREN has been able to re-connect JUNet to GÉANT and the wider R&E

community, via ASREN's own connectivity and its PoP in London, and this includes serving the regional SESAME synchrotron facility which is based in Jordan. Lebanon is also now connected and developing well, and Palestine is also getting interested again.

In AfricaConnect2, ASREN's focus is on North Africa, but we are working closely with our African sister organisations WACREN and the UbuntuNet Alliance. With the support of GÉANT and the EU, we act as a family to bring an African R&E network into life. The ASREN community benefits vastly, as resources and expertise can be shared and solutions to shared issues can be found.

To date we have Algeria and Egypt connected to GÉANT under AfricaConnect2. Seamless continuation of the project beyond 2018 is vital to re-connect also Morocco and Tunisia and to progress towards a sustainable network in the region and an enduring place on the global R&E map.

Despite the challenges, ASREN has successfully established annual conferences for the regional R&E community, under the e-AGE name. This year's event will take place in Cairo on 3 and 4 December and will be the 6th edition – it certainly has proved a very successful focus for the very diverse yet talented R&E community. All members of the GÉANT community are warmly welcome to join us!

Arab States Research and Education Network
Talal Abu-Ghazaleh University, Bldg, No.46, Abd Al-Raheem Al-Waked Street
Shmeisani, Amman
Tel: +962 6 5100 250

Email: info@asrenorg.net | **f** **ASREN**

asrenorg.net