

“ASREN is a non-profit company with limited liability (GmbH) and is officially registered in Germany, under the umbrella of the League of Arab States. The main goal is to connect Arab institutions among themselves and to the globe through high-speed data-communications networks. Such networks will enable sharing and access to a variety of R&E services and applications in addition to utilization of highly sophisticated and technologically advanced computing resources available only at very few institutions in the world.”

Abu Ghazaleh: “Developing Research and Education Infrastructures towards Supporting Innovation”



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Under the patronage of HE Olfa Benouda Sioud, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Tunisia, the Arab States Research and Educational Network (ASREN) successfully conducted its 10th annual conference virtually, during the period: 14-17 December 2020. The conference has been hosted by the Tunisian Computing Center, Al Khawarizmi (CCK).

Many virtual events took place during ASREN’s main conference: “The 10th International Platform on Integrating Arab e-Infrastructures in a Global Environment - e-AGE20”. These included workshops on Internet Security, Open Science Cloud, and other regional



and global meetings. The e-AGE20 virtual week provided a window for global collaboration across research and education communities, gathering 35 renowned speakers and experts and more than 180 participants from 60 countries.

The e-AGE20 activities focused on “Power of e-Infrastructures - Shaping the Future of Online Research and Education” as the main theme, with emphasis on the role of e-Infrastructures in the COVID-19 pandemic era.

The e-AGE20 opening was attended by a large number of high level officials and representatives including; Barbé Thierry, Head of Unit at the European Commission, HE Dr. Doaa Khalifa, Minister Plenipotentiary of the League of Arab States, HE Prof. Amr Salama, Secretary General of the Association of Arab Universities, HE Prof. Dr. Hussein Hazeab, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research of Yemen and Prof. Malek Kochlef, Director General of International Cooperation, on behalf of HE Prof. Olfa Benouda, Minister of Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research of Tunisia.

HE Dr. Talal Abu-Ghazaleh, Chairman of ASREN and TAG.GLOBAL concluded the opening session by acknowledging the role of the European Union in co-funding high-speed networks in the context of AFRICACONNECT and EUMEDCONNECT projects. These networks have contributed to supporting research and education in the African and Mediterranean region through interlinkage to the European GEANT research and education network, he said.

Abu-Ghazaleh furthermore emphasized the importance of advancing the Arab e-Infrastructure towards enhancing education and advancing science and technology as well as developing innovation capacity and providing hope to the young generations. He sought the support and collaboration of the research and education leaders from around the world to make this vision a living reality.

The high-level opening also featured a roundtable discussion on “Working Globally”, with CEOs of Regional Research and Education Networks from across Europe, North and Latin America,

Africa, Asia-Pacific and the Arab region, emphasizing the necessity of cooperation at the global level to support and facilitate research and education collaboration globally.

Regional and Global organizations have demonstrated the effect of their support on the development of research and education infrastructures and communities, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, including the European Commission, Association of Arab Universities and International Telecom Union. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) discussed the Role of STI “Science, Technology and Innovation” in creating synergy between Academia and Industry from Sustainable Development Goals perspective (SDGs).

The Internet Society announced the signature of a memorandum of understanding with ASREN to support the developments of ASREN in serving the research and education communities in the region. RIPE NCC continued to support ASREN through sponsorship, capacity building and training. AFRINIC has also supported ASREN through sponsorship.

Regional and Global research and education communities have also discussed the importance of a reliable infrastructures and services to enable innovative and productive research and education. The Arab League of Educational,

Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) presented their efforts in developing the pan-Arab platform for open educational resources, and invited Arab universities and academics to participate in this platform and to add more open resources. The African Union Commission presented one of their activities on Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES and Africa). Synchrotron-light for Experimental Science and Applications in the Middle East (SESAME) presented the research opportunities using the Synchrotron systems, encouraging support to strengthen the Synchrotron communities in Africa. e-Science European Infrastructure for Biodiversity and Ecosystem (LifeWatch ERIC) discussed Research Establishing synergies with ASREN e-AGE on e-Biodiversity for EU Green Deal and SDG 2030.

“Open Science and Open Access” were thoroughly discussed in the e-AGE20 conference through the high level participation and presence of the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC) and the National Initiatives for Open Science in Europe (NI4OS Europe). ASREN presented its plans towards deploying and implementing Open Science and Open Cloud services in the Arab region with the support of the EU co-funded project africaConenct3. National Open Access initiatives in the region were also discussed with examples in Palestine and regional activities under LIBSENSE initiative.

Fourfold increase in capacity for EU-Algerian R&E collaborations under AfricaConnect3

2020 is ending with good news for the research and education (R&E) community in Algeria: the international connectivity has just been upgraded from 2.5 to 10 Gbps with the support of the EU co-funded AfricaConnect3 project. AfricaConnect3 fosters the development of African R&E communities across the continent, interconnecting them with their counterparts around the world, by establishing secure, adequate and affordable network infrastructures. The Research Centre on Scientific and Technical Information (CERIST), Algeria's partner organisation in AfricaConnect3, runs the Algerian Research Network (ARN) responsible for delivering value-added networking and connectivity services to the country's scientists, academics and students.

“The upgrade of our international connection is driven by user demand. Algerian researchers, teachers and students are now even better positioned to engage in international collaborations with their peers around the world and leave their mark.” Hacene Belbachir, CEO at CERIST.

“We look forward to providing more dedicated network support and to improving services to our user communities.” Aouaouche El-Maouhab, ARN Manager at CERIST.

Algeria has been connected continuously to Europe since 2004, making it the longest connected partner country in the regional networking projects managed by the pan-European network GÉANT. The country's international connectivity has seen a sharp increase since then, going from an initial circuit of 45Mbps in 2004 to 2.5Gbps under AfricaConnect2 in 2016.



ARN currently interconnects 57 universities, 25 institutes of higher education and 20 research institutes with a total of around 1,500,000 students and 100,000 staff and scientists. Thanks to dedicated international R&E connectivity, Algerian user communities will participate more in data-intensive global collaborative research, such as the LHC ATLAS experiments, and earth observation missions which entail an enormous numerical workload and geographically distributed analysis, and therefore require stable access to the global R&E network fabric.

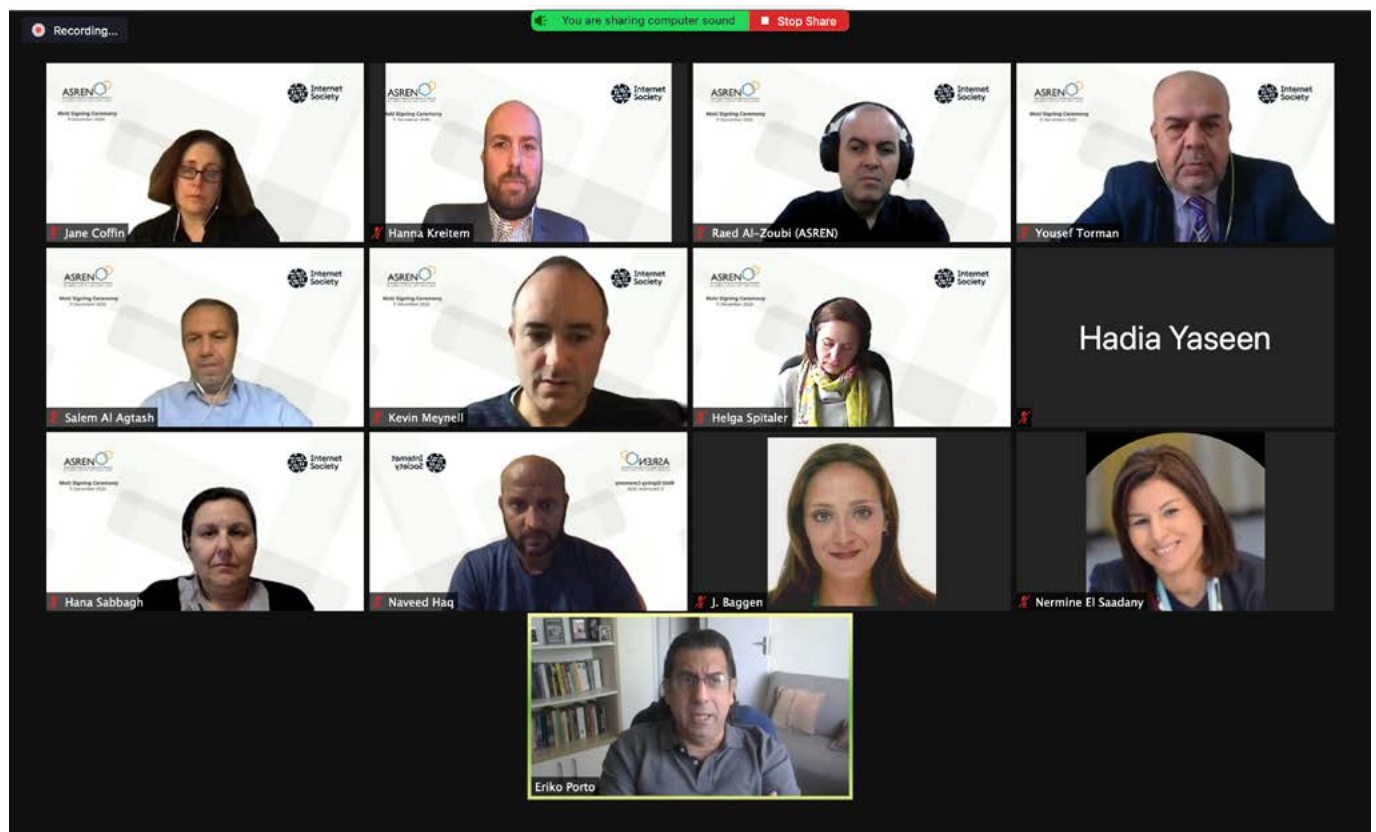
Having previously been a partner in the EUMEDCONNECT project since 2002, Algeria joined the AfricaConnect programme in June 2015 during the second project phase as a member of the Arab States Research and Education Network (ASREN), together with Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia. ASREN is the regional partner responsible for delivering the AfricaConnect3 project in the North African region. ASREN is supported by the pan-European networking organisation GÉANT which is tasked with the overall coordination as well as procurement activities within the project.

“In these unprecedented times of crisis that we are living in, it is important to join forces and give students and learners around the world the opportunity to access digital transformation. The connectivity boost in Algeria is expected to enhance research and education collaborations across both shores of the Mediterranean. We at GÉANT look forward to continuing working with ARN and ASREN to optimise the infrastructure in support of our user communities”. Erik Huizer, CEO at GÉANT.

Yousef Torman, Managing Director at ASREN

said: “We sincerely believe that this connectivity upgrade will uplift the efficiency and productivity of research and education communities in Algeria, bringing us one step closer to achieving our vision of boosting scientific research, innovation and education levels across North Africa, the Middle East and the wider Arab region to the highest standards in the world. On behalf of ASREN, I would like to thank the European Union for their e contributions in the context of AfricaConnect3 that have been so critical for this achievement.”

ASREN and ISOC Strengthen Ties through MoU



The Arab States Research and Education Network (ASREN) and Internet Society (ISOC) recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with a vision of an open, globally-connected, secure and trustworthy Internet for everyone.

At the virtual signing ceremony on December 11, Nermine El Saadany, Regional Vice President of ISOC said: “ISOC’s goal is to ensure the Internet continues to grow and evolve as a platform for innovation, economic development, and social progress for people around the world. Such a goal is widely shared by many organizations across the world, including ASREN in the Arab region. ISOC has built a sound partnership with ASREN through engagement and sponsorship to many of its activities. We therefore welcome signing the MoU to continue our cooperation with ASREN and to jointly shape the future of Internet for better collaborations and improved research outcomes.”

The primary areas of cooperation agreed upon in the memorandum include capacity development, collaboration on Mutually Agreed Norms for Routing Security (MANRS) adoption, and the development of ASREN. Further potential areas of collaboration shall be explored.

Yousef Torman, Managing Director of ASREN, welcomed the new cooperation opportunities: “The relationship between ASREN and ISOC is longstanding. ISOC has been a major supporter to ASREN’s activities and its e-AGE annual conference for years and this has helped foster the good relations between us. We look forward to joining forces with ISOC to continue supporting our research and education communities in the Arab region with the support of the European Union’s co-funded projects AFRICACONNECT3 and EUMEDCONNECT3.”

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