ASREN

Arab States Research and Education Network

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*"**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."*
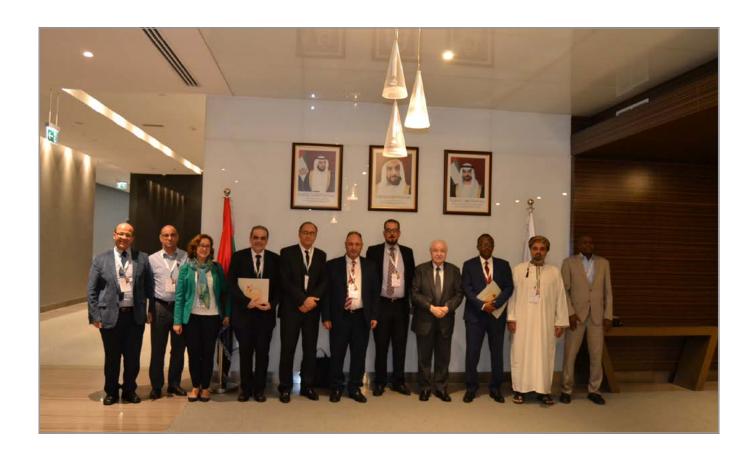
In this issue

Abu-Ghazaleh Chairs ASREN Shareholders' Annual Meeting

Abu Dhabi – HE Dr. Talal Abu-Ghazaleh chaired the annual meeting of the Arab States Research and Education Network (ASREN) shareholders at Khalifeh University in Abu Dhabi. He expressed his appreciation to Ankabout and Khalifeh University for hosting the 9th e-AGE Conference as well as to ASREN's shareholders active participation and support to the development of the pan-Arab research e-Infrastructures.

Abu-Ghazaleh announced NREN representatives from Somalia, Iraq, and Palestine as new official

shareholders of ASREN. He approved ASREN's financial statement of 2018 and its operational plan of 2020, which emphasized the development of pan Arab research and education network. It also emphasized 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.

In the shareholders' meeting, it was decided to follow the recommendations of e-AGE which emphasize 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 the development of research infrastructure development across the Arab countries. It was also decided to build on the success of the EUMEDCONNECT, AFRICACONNECT and other European funded projects to enhance collaboration between Arab and European scientists and to promote the development of research that focuses on the use of e-Infrastructures.

At the end, It was decided to hold e-AGE 2020 in December 2020 in Tunisia in coordination with the Tunisian CCK (le Centre de Calcul El- Khawarizmi).

Abu Ghazaleh: AfricaConnect3 project to extend pan-African high-speed internet connectivity and services for research and education

Brussels, Belgium - Following the success of previous projects 'AfricaConnect' and 'AfricaConnect2', Africa's 3 regional Research and Education Networks (RENs) the Arab States Research and Education Network (ASREN), UbuntuNet Alliance, and West and Central African Research and Education Network (WACREN), in partnership with Europe's leading collaboration on e-infrastructure and services GÉANT, have signed a new €37.5m contract agreement with the European Union (EU) to extend their regional networks and to continue providing high-speed internet connectivity and services to National Research and Education Networks across Africa.

Signing of the contract agreement took place in Brussels, Belgium on 18th December 2019 at a ceremony presided over by EU officials and representatives from the four partners. Under AfricaConnect3, which will run for four years until 2023, the EU is contributing €30m towards the project budget with the three African regional RENs raising the remaining €7.5m.

The AfricaConnect3 project aims particularly to enhance human capital development in Africa through the advocacy of rapid increases in the use of digital technologies by African research and education institutions.

Building on the success of its previous projects, which brought dedicated high-speed internet connectivity to students and researchers and opened a gateway to international collaboration, AfricaConnect3 will specifically strive to ensure that:

- Access to adequate and affordable-e-infrastructure for tertiary education and research institutions is improved.
- Dedicated services and applications are developed for the benefit of education and research communities.
- Adequate human resource capacity and expertise is built within education and research communities.
- Raises awareness of the role of digital transformation for education and research.

Currently, 15 African countries deploy the global WiFi roaming service eduroam at universities and research institutions with a further five countries running pilots. From job creation to empowering women in STEM to the birth of African Open Science initiatives in support of data-intensive scientific international collaborations, the AfricaConnect project – in all its phases – contributes to the digital transformation in the African research and education community and, in turn, it fights brain drain and fosters development on the continent. Domenico Rosa, Head of Unit Strategic Partnerships EU-AFRICA, CARIBBEAN and PACIFIC, EU-African Union - DG Development and International Cooperation-European

Commission says: "The EC is delighted to partner with African RENs and GÉANT from Europe to leverage the great results from the previous two phases of the AfricaConnect Project to further push digital transformation for African research and education institutions."

HE Dr. Talal Abu Ghazaleh, Chairman of ASREN said: "This is another concrete step that will help us to take the e-Infrastructures in Africa forward. We thank the EC for the support we have been receiving since 2005. We, at TAG.GLOBAL, are also committed to support ASREN and the developments of e-Infrastructures in Africa and the Arab region".

GÉANT CEO, Erik Huizer sees AfricaConnect3 as an opportunity for wider collaboration: "GÉANT is delighted to be part of this project, and thankful to the European Commission for the grant. We look forward to continue working with our African partners. The European research and education community shows an increasing demand for communication and information sharing with their African peers. So, we see this project as not only improving access for Africa's students and researchers, but really benefiting the global community. GÉANT's long-standing

and well-proven expertise in procurement will be integral to the success of this project."

For UbuntuNet Alliance, CEO Eng. Dr. Matthews Mtumbuka believes AfricaConnect3 will accelerate research and education breakthroughs throughout Africa: "Without this funding, it would take decades to achieve the breakthroughs we see happening in the research and education arena across Africa by 2023. For this we as UbuntuNet Alliance in particular and Africa in general are infinitely grateful to the European Commission."

Dr. Boubakar Barry, WACREN CEO Commented: "We at WACREN are very excited to see the launch of AfricaConnect3 thanks to funding from the European Commission. AfricaConnect2 allowed us to deploy the first phase of the WACREN backbone and to connect first countries in the region to the global research and education network. AfricaConnect3 will allow to connect more countries and to expand the backbone, providing to thousands and thousands of users in higher education and research institutions in West and Central unprecedented high speed connectivity and advanced services."

Abu-Ghazaleh: Egyptian Universities Network (EUN) Connects to ASREN and GÉANT under the AfricaConnect3 Project

The Arab States Research and Education Network (ASREN) and the Egyptian Universities Network (EUN) have signed an agreement during ASREN's ninth annual conference in Abu Dhabi, under which ASREN will provide a high bandwidth link between EUN and the pan-European GÉANT network through ASREN's Point of Presence (PoP) in London. ASREN will operate the link initially at 500 Mbps with the possibility of capacity increases in the future.

The agreement was signed by Eng. Yousef Torman, Executive Director of ASREN and Prof. Ibrahim Fathy, Director of Knowledge and Services Centre (EKSC) at the Supreme Council of Universities (SCU) on behalf of EUN.

EUN is the Egyptian National Research and Education Network (NREN), which provides internet connectivity, applications and services to the research and education (R&E) communities in Egypt. The connection will allow researchers, academics and students to get access to the global R&E network fabric, enabling them to collaborate with peers in Europe, USA, Latin America, Asia and Africa, in addition to other Arab countries.

The agreement marks Egypt's joining the international R&E networking community with the support of the EU co-funded AfricaConnect3 project, which aims to support the development of high-capacity internet networks for R&E across Africa. In North Africa, the project is being delivered by ASREN, whilst the African sister organisation UbuntuNet Alliance and WACREN manage the project in East-South Africa and in West and Central Africa, respectively with the overall project coordination by the pan-European network organisation GÉANT. HE Dr. Talal Abu-Ghazaleh, Chairman of ASREN said: "We are pleased to welcome our colleagues from the Egyptian Universities Network community; we sincerely believe that this connection will stimulate and increase collaborations between Egypt and the global R&E community. Connecting EUN is part of our strategic vision and mission to connect all NRENs in the region between themselves and to other parts of the continent and the global R&E community. On behalf of ASREN, I would like to thank the European Commission for their respective contributions in the context of AfricaConenct3 that have been so critical for this achievement."

Prof. Ibrahim Fathy said: "This agreement provides EUN and the research and education communities in Egypt with the following features: Internet protocol services, technical skills capacity building, knowledge exchange with GÉANT, ASREN and other regional and international RENs, and knowledge exchange with the wider R&E community through ASREN's annual conference."

Helga Spitaler, Senior International Relations Project Manager at GÉANT said: "EUN has been a longstanding R&E networking partner in North Africa, first in EUMEDCONNECT and subsequently in the AfricaConnect projects. GÉANT welcomes EUN's re-connection to the global R&E network fabric as a first achievement of AfricaConnect3 which also clearly demonstrates ASREN's leadership capabilities of delivering the project in the region."

RIPE NCC Joins International Conference on Arab e-infrastructure

The Réseaux IP Européens Network Coordination Centre (RIPE NCC), the Regional Internet Registry for more than 24,000 members across 78 countries, recently sponsored and participated to the 2019 edition of the annual e-AGE international conference organised by the Arab States Research and Education Network (ASREN) in Abu Dhabi, as part of its academic capacity building initiatives. Innovators, researchers, scientists, academics and businessmen were among the conference's attendees.

During e-AGE, the RIPE NCC took the opportunity to discuss the organisation and its mandate to the global audience explaining its main functions in the Middle East region, including providing

support for the infrastructure of the Internet through technical coordination, offering services for the benefit of the Internet community at large, and increasing the deployment of IPv6 through various training and advisory programs.

The RIPE NCC provides a range of measurement tools and services as well, to support the operations of its members who comprise academic and research networks, enterprise network owners, Internet service providers (ISPs), and telecom operators, among others.

Dr. Yousef Torman, Managing Director of ASREN, said "The e-AGE conference had established itself as an important venue for networking among experts and scientists. This is in line with ASREN's bid to integrate the Arab e-infrastructure with the global environment. ASREN welcomes the partnership with the RIPE NCC as a strategic move that could expand both our roles in further developing Internet connectivity in the region. The RIPE NCC provides valuable support in our efforts to improve Internet connectivity for academic and education networks in the Arab region and move our cooperation to a higher level of coordination and integration".

Chafic Chaya, Regional Communications Manager, commented: "This international conference was an ideal venue for us to network with a broad range of global experts and relevant stakeholders to exchange information and best practices in research and education networks in the Arab region and worldwide. During the event, we interacted with officials and representatives of higher education, scientific research and other e-Infrastructure stakeholders looking into reinforcing the contributions of the RIPE NCC to research and innovation as a mean of attaining our shared objectives and goals".

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