ASREN

Arab States Research and Education Network

ASREN *Newsletter*

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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

A Decade of ASREN: Celebration of Success

In 2010, ASREN, the Arab States Research and Education Network, was launched at the League of Arab States with a mission to establish a pan-Arab e-Infrastructures for research and education. As a non-profit organization, ASREN has been formed with NREN shareholders representing Morocco, Jordan, Tunis, Egypt, Palestine, Iraq, Sudan, and Somalia and NREN membership and participation of the remaining Arab countries.

Since the inception of ASREN, the pan Arab research and education e-Infrastructures have significantly evolved. Most of the Arab countries have established NRENs or started the process of developing their NREN. ASREN has been coordinated with the Arab NRENs to build a comprehensive Arab connect with a regional Gigabits backbone. The regional backbone is seen as a critical enhancement to education and advancement to science

and technology as well as a means to develop innovation capacity and provide hope to the young generation.

With co-funding from the European Commission, ASREN has contributed to the development of a number of NRENs and their international peering with the European and the global advanced research and education networks via its PoP in London. It has been an active partner in the EUMEDCONNECT and AFRICACONNECT and other EC funded projects to advance the e-Infrastructure as a powerful scientific instrument and an innovative resource for research and education. In the context of these projects, high-speed networks and services evolved to meet the growing demand for seamless access to resources and for distributed computations to analyze, model, simulate and visualize diverse datasets and applications in a variety of scientific domains.

In celebration of its upcoming 10th anniversary ASREN unveils the redesigning of its logo reflecting a decade of success. This occasion will be marked throughout ASREN's annual conference the e-AGE20, International Platform on Integrating Arab e-Infrastructure in a Global Environment, to be held in Tunis, Tunisia during 14-15 December 2020.

e-AGE20 / 14-15 December 2020 / Tunis, Tunisia
Power of e-Infrastructures - Shaping the Future of Online Research and Education

e-AGE20, the 10th edition of the International Platform on Integrating Arab e-Infrastructure in a Global Environment will be held in Tunis, Tunisia during 14-15 December 2020. Its focus will be on the role of e-Infrastructures in the crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic.

e-AGE 20 will be a forum to share practices and experiences that go beyond teaching online courses and sharing resources in today's unprecedented isolation. NRENs and e-Infrastructures provide essential means to stay connected and to meet the new challenges of research and education.

ASREN · Years · CELEBRATING A DECADE OF SUCCESS

e-AGE 20

"Power of e-Infrastructures – Shaping the Future of Online Research and Education"

Tunis, Tunisia
14 - 15 December 2020

It is expected to invite renowned speakers and experts to share their experiences and debate on the complex global phenomenon and scientific challenges of COVID-19 pandemic. Topics may include unique experiences of research collaboration, online teaching and learning, resource sharing, assessments, and classroom integration and interaction. Topics may also include the role of NRENs in the COVID-19 crisis and how their global integration have spurred new ways of communication and sharing in addressing challenges at the global scale. e-AGE20 is coming with "Power of e-Infrastructures - Shaping the Future of Online Research and Education" as the main theme of the conference and all activities are centered on it.

For more details and registration, please visit the conference website at: *http://asrenorg.net/eage20/*

CCK role in supporting remote delivery of education during the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to the temporary closure of educational institutions around the world in an attempt to contain the spread of the virus. Tunisia is no exception to this state. Faced with this unprecedented crisis, the Tunisian Computing Center al Khawarizmi (CCK) together with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research have taken several measures to support remote delivery of education.

To ensure sufficient pedagogical communication between students and teachers, CCK has set up a videoconferencing tool based on Jitsi, which is a set of open-source projects that allows faculty members to easily build and deploy secure video conferencing solutions, to assist them in holding synchronous classroom sessions with their students.
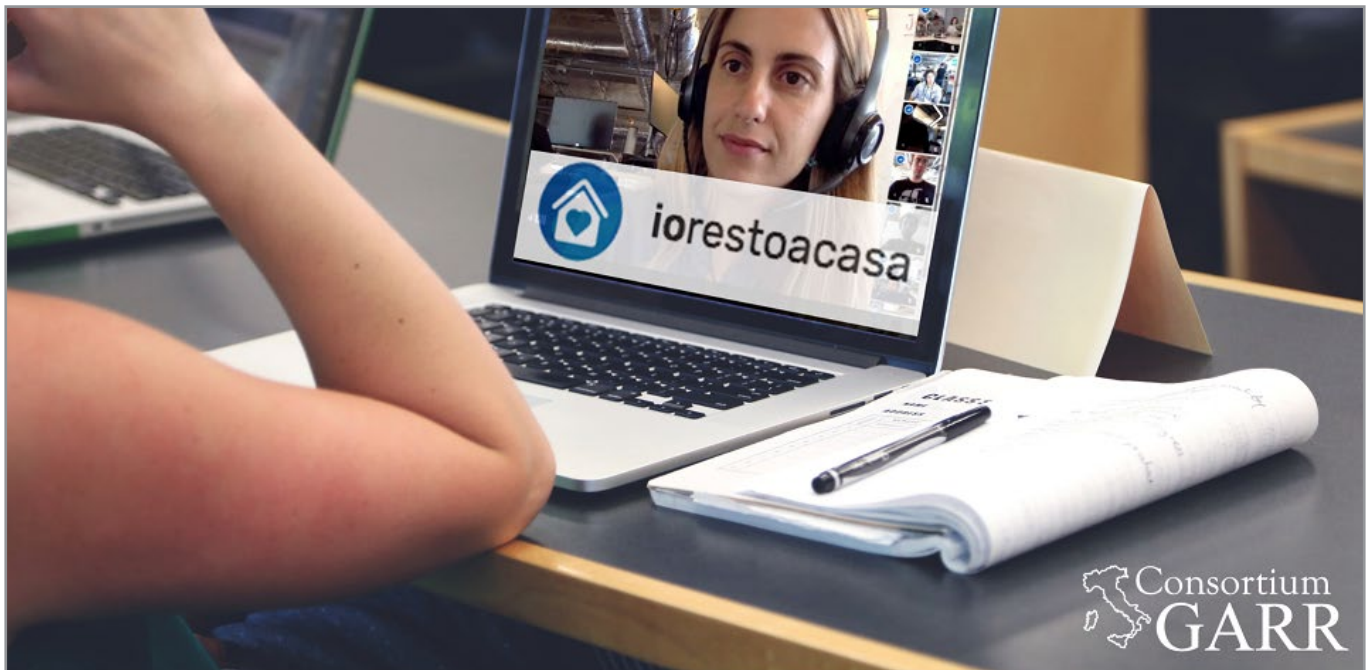
CCK has also set up a VPN-SSL to help the entire academic community in securing access to e-learning platforms and scientific resources published by Elsevier, Springer, IEEE, Wiley, etc., and available via the University National Centre of Scientific and Technical Documentation (CNUDST).

Furthermore, the CCK has been entrusted by the Tunisian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research to sign contracts with the country's three main telecom operators. This collaboration will grant Tunisian students free 4G access and ensure that they benefit from the possibility of accessing digital platforms available for distance learning across all Tunisian universities.

CCK General Director,
Prof. Habib Youssef

CCK General Director, Prof. Habib Youssef emphasized the constant efforts to provide quality education even in these exceptional times: "CCK will strive to make sure that no student is left out, particularly for more disadvantaged areas, and to facilitate the continuity of education for all through remote learning."

Open source for distance learning thanks to the iorestoacasa.work initiative

The iorestoacasa.work (literally Istayathome) initiative was launched by a team of developers from the Italian city of Fabriano with the aim to offer a free and open source solution to those who need to videoconference in these quarantine days caused by the coronavirus emergency.

GARR, Italy's national research and education network is among the first organisations to enthusiastically join the initiative by making available its own server: open.meet.garr.it. Thanks to this act of digital solidarity, a larger number of people will be able to benefit from this platform.

The project is based on Jitsi Meet, an open source system that allows users to make video calls quickly and in an intuitive manner, simply by opening a link on a browser, with no need for specific apps or registrations, thanks to the potential of the WebRTC protocol.

"GARR already provides videoconferencing services that are available for the research and education community", says Massimo Carboni, GARR CTO, "by joining this project we intend to expand the audience of users, focusing in particular on schools, that currently have fewer resources. In this way we can offer an easy-to-use solution with a normal domestic Internet connection".

The initiative, which has just been launched, will also be an important test bench to

understand the number of requests and consider to increase the resources available if necessary. In fact, the project is based on a collaborative approach where multiple organisations can participate by sharing their own servers. Among the members of GARR community, the Italian National Research Council (CNR) has already joined with the resources of the Institute of Methodologies for Environmental Analysis (IMAA).

With regards to the video conferencing services, GARR has been working and experimenting with new solutions since before the emergency, with the aim to enrich the proposals for its user community. The international collaboration with the European network Géant for the eduMEET project also fits in this direction. The eduMEET platform is a multi-videoconference system developed within the GÉANT project.

In order to support schools, the Up2U project, an international collaboration that sees GARR, Sapienza University of Rome, Géant and CERN among its partners, will make available the OpenUP2U platform, a complete suite based on Moodle and open to all. The project, conceived as a path to help schools in the use of digital, will make available to all education institutes for free collaborative platforms for creating documents, file sharing and e-learning.

Source:
https://www.inthefieldstories.net/open-source-for-distance-learning-thanks-to-the-iorestoacasa-work-initiative/

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