Newsletter

Successful completion of SEERA-EI project

The SEERA-EI project finished in the end of March 2012 after 3 years of activity, successfully setting the framework for the adoption of a common eInfrastructures vision in South East Europe (SEE), and having carried out a number of concrete policy-level actions in the area of SEE and in relationship to wider European eInfrastructure trends. The project brought together key policy-makers in e-Infrastructures in South East Europe, and boosted coordination between national eInfrastructure programmes and policies. The initiative was materialized by 19 partners from 10 countries in the region. Overall, SEERA-EI reduced fragmentation of national programmes, created a harmonised approach to national-level initiatives in eInfrastructures, ensured local commitment, and paved the way towards common regional vision, strategy and sustainable cooperation.

SEERA-EI established a platform for information exchange on eInfrastructure issues that enhanced communication among national-level programme managers in the region. Additionally, digital communication tools, active beyond the project lifetime, form the basis for interactive communication and content management. The project carried out an in-depth analysis of existing programmes in the wider area of eInfrastructures at national level in SEE countries, as well as an analysis of the status of main components of eInfrastructure: National Research and Education Networks and National Grid/Computing Initiatives. Twenty nine programmes were surveyed and assessed, individually and comparatively. Regional priority areas were defined as: the stability and sustainability of network operations, specifically dark fibres; the emerging computing paradigms such as High-Performance Computing and cloud computing;

transnational access and regional end-user applications; and ESFRI integrations.

Two core documents supporting the national policy-making process and programme management were produced. The first, "National Programmes Best Practices" provides the national programme best practices for e-Infrastructures regarding relevance, quality, and performance of the programmes. The second, "National Programme Cookbook" is a base-level guide on e-Infrastructure programmes for national programme owners in the SEE region, and provides fundamental framework, with strong alignment with the corresponding EC Framework Programme, for an e-Infrastructure programme. SEERA-EI produced guidelines for evaluation of national programmes and actual post evaluation has been carried out, and the joint database of experts in the field of eInfrastructures is operational.

A number of joint official documents, such as the joint common vision and regional strategy of eInfrastructures were created and signed, enabling future work beyond the project lifetime. The vision agreed stated that by 2020, South-East European countries will in all aspects be an equal partner within European infrastructures, while a number of regional infrastructures (networking, grid, HPC, cloud computing, data and VRCs) will be further strengthened. The sharing of those resources between the countries of the region is supported, as well as concepts of joint regional operations and of a mutual open access policy for researchers from the region to national computing infrastructures. Within SEERA-EI, three other Memoranda of Understanding were signed: SEE MoU on Grid and eInfrastructure development; MoU for High-Performance Computing resource sharing in SEE;

and MoU on networking collaboration in SEE. Furthermore, the concept of formulating a joint SEE Initiative led to two studies addressing the setting up of a SEE-level operations body for SEELight network, or the possible regional grouping for High-Performance Computing.

Six countries participating in the SEERA-EI project have committed to make national contributions into a "Virtual Common Pot" to fund successful joint research projects: the joint call on Scientific Cloud Computing is being published in May. The expected impact is the increase in regional know-how in cloud computing and its potential applications, and paving the way for the regional cloud computing open environment for research and education.

The project developed liaisons with ESFRI, e-IRG, EGI, PRACE, GEANT, eINFRAnet, EuroRIsNet, and other initiatives, improving the sharing of know-how in terms of policies, programmes and vision within the region and beyond, and enabled transfer of knowledge to improve the regional infrastructure and ease the digital divide.

The excellent collaboration among the members of the project consortium, and the human network of the region, is an essential element of the project success that enables the SEE countries to reduce the fragmentation of the European Research Area.

The sustainable cooperation that has been achieved goes beyond the project lifetime, including liaisons with the industry: it strengthens the region, encourages collaborative eInfrastructure development and high-quality research, and it can serve as a potential platform for driving innovation using research policies, outcomes, schemes, models and technologies.

Conference on the "Use of Information Technologies in Education and Science"

Belgrade University Computer Centre (RCUB) and the Ministry for Education and Science of the Republic of Serbia organized a one day conference "Use of Information Technologies in Education and Science". The conference took place on Friday, March 30th, 2012.in Belgrade.

The conference marked the successful completion of the SEERA-EI project, and covered topics such as the state and perspectives of the development of informatics society in Serbia, the activities of RCUB and the Academy network of Serbia (AMRES) as the carriers of the informatics society development. Additionally, the use of information technologies in scientific, research and education work was discussed, as well as new IT services available to the academic community, and the perspectives of e-Infrastructure in the region and future plans.

The aim of this event was to reflect on the results of current projects, encourage future cooperation, straighten the correlation between the education in Serbia and information technologies, as well as promote the technologies and institutions which have contributed to the development and improvement of higher education and scientific and research work in Serbia in the last two decades.

The event was attended by 50 participants, including e-Infrastructure related high level members from ministries, universities, EU bodies in Serbia, research centers and public bodies. and research centers.

At the opening meeting of State Secretary of Ministry of Education and Science Republic of Serbia, prof. Radivoje Mitrovic said that "improving the quality of not only literacy but also the infrastructure of the utmost importance, because without them there is not raising the quality of education, which is clearly written in the Education Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia". Belgrade University Rector prof. Dr. Branko Kovacevic has indicated that "we are on track to create a quality educational system in Serbia. Without the computer network and the Internet can not talk about the quality of the education system, it is necessary to make a serious system of distance learning. "

At the meeting the conditions and prospects of development of information society in Serbia and the use of information technology in research and education activities with a new IT services available to the academic community are presented.

This event was an opportunity to highlight the anniversary of University of Belgrade Computer Center (RCUB), which this year celebrates 20 years of work.

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