

“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.”

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Abu-Ghazaleh: Tunisian Academic and Research Network (RNU) Joins GÉANT and ASREN Networks under the AfricaConnect2 Project



Amman, Jordan, Tunis, Tunisia - H.E. Dr. Talal Abu-Ghazaleh, Chairman of the Arab States Research and Education Network (ASREN) and Prof. Habib Youssef, Director General of Centre de Calcul El Khawarizmi (CCK), the entity responsible for the management of the Tunisian National Research and Education Network (RNU), have signed an agreement under which ASREN will provide a 1 Gbps connection between CCK and the pan-European GÉANT network through ASREN's Point of Presence (PoP) in London.

RNU is the Tunisian National Research and Education Network (NREN) which provides internet connectivity, applications and services to the research and education (R&E) communities in Tunisia. This agreement will allow researchers, academics and students to get access to the global R&E networking infrastructure, enabling them to collaborate with peers in Europe, USA, Latin America, Asia and Africa, in addition to other Arab countries.

The agreement marks Tunisia's re-joining the international R&E networking community in the context of the EU-funded AfricaConnect2 project. The project aims to support the development of high-capacity internet networks for R&E across Africa. AfricaConnect2 is managed by networking organisation GÉANT in conjunction with ASREN and regional sister organisations in Eastern & Southern Africa (Ubuntunet Alliance) and in West and Central Africa (WACREN).

Dr. Talal Abu-Ghazaleh, Chairman of ASREN said: "We are pleased to see the pan-Arab research and education network growing rapidly, and Tunisia remains an important country with a high research and innovation profile. The connection with Tunisia will support more regional peering of R&E traffic and stronger research collaborations."

Prof. Habib Youssef, General Director of CCK said, "The network infrastructure of the Tunisian National Research and Education Network (RNU) has significantly improved over the last five years. It is now an all-optical network with 20 Gbps capacity in the core and providing fibre optic access to nearly 440 academic institutions and research centres, spread all over Tunisia. This has boosted our international traffic to nearly 5Gbps. We have been working for over three years on establishing direct connectivity to the pan-European network GÉANT, with the objective of giving access for the Tunisian scientific community to the numerous computational resources and rich service portfolio available on GÉANT. It is our hope that these services will further improve the many ongoing scientific and academic collaborations between Tunisian and EU researchers."

Mr. David West, GÉANT's project manager for the AfricaConnect2 North Africa cluster commented: "GÉANT is delighted Tunisia is reconnected to the European R&E community thanks to the AfricaConnect2 project and efforts by ASREN and CCK. A further project phase of AfricaConnect is due to start next year and I look forward to Tunisia making the most of the project funding and support for the benefit of its community and to contribute to many international scientific and socially beneficial collaborations".

ASREN and NSRC Hold NREN BGP Workshop in Amman



AMMAN – The Arab States Research and Education Network (ASREN) in cooperation with the Network Startup Resource Center (NSRC) at the University of Oregon in the USA organized a specialized workshop on “NREN Border Gateway Protocol (BGP)” in Amman, Jordan, during 4-7 December 2018.

This four-day workshop was conducted with the attendance of 11 representatives of National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) and universities in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia.

The NREN BGP workshop included a variety of lectures and hands-on lab work and was specifically designed to give the workshop participants focused knowledge, aiming to empower them with BGP skills required for the configuration and operation of Research and Education networks; whether at national University or National REN level; to R&E backbones.

The workshop was held in cooperation with EUMEDCONENCT3 and AfricaConnect2 Projects, both funded by the European Commission.

A Recap: UbuntuNet-Connect 2018 Towards African SMART Universities – Services that Matter



The 11th UbuntuNet-Connect conference could not deny one of the hottest topics on the continent: digital transformation. Therefore, this year's conference, held in the beautiful Zanzibar, focused on the concept of SMART education and research. This topic was not just exploited during the two-day conference, but also during co-located events days before.

An important meeting around the conference theme was the Vice Chancellor's ICT Forum, where several universities from the Eastern and Southern part of Africa gathered to discuss and brainstorm all things digital in today's research and education environment. Sessions covered topics ranging from challenges of emerging digital transformation, learning and teaching innovation in a digital university, the future of ICT in African higher education, a SMART

university administration concluding with a roundtable discussion on how to tackle these topics.

Furthermore, librarians gathered for the LIBSENSE workshop to convene library and NREN stakeholders to explore how repositories can operate embedded in NREN e-infrastructure and provide a foundation for an innovative, open, distributed and networked resource for scholarly communication and open science in Africa.

Next to that, there were workshops on identity, networking and one on communications. The identity workshop covered the concepts and practical implementations of identity, authentication & authorization using a federated approach. Participants of the technical networking workshop developed skills in

Interior Gateway Protocol (IGP) and Border Gateway Protocol (BGP) required for the configuration and operation of the large-scale networks that make up the internet according to current industry best practices. The skills learned during this course will help improve the performance of the NREN and the campus networks connected to them. During the communications workshop attendees were stimulated to view communication activities as important ways to inform stakeholders about the importance of having an NREN and not to shy away from it. More about this workshop is to be found in a dedicated blogpost.

On Thursday the 22nd of November, the UbuntuNet-Connect conference kicked-off with the attendance of Minister of Education, Science and Technology for Tanzania Prof. Joyce Ndalichako who officially opened the conference.

“We are aware that despite the progress the global world is making Tanzania continues to lag behind in the uptake of ICT and innovation and this is mainly due to the prohibitive cost of bandwidth as well as slow speed internet. We are happy that organizations like UbuntuNet Alliance are helping local entities like TERNET to help us solve this problem. As government we are committed to helping TERNET have the required resources to reach the acceptable levels of ICT advancement that can allow the country participate in global agendas as we can not afford to continue to lag behind,” she said.

With these powerful and promising words, the conference contained a energised vibe, sustained

by the speakers who shared their challenges, results of studies, and perhaps most importantly, solutions and recommendations. These aim to help not only Tanzania, but the entire region to develop even better in terms of innovation, and decrease the digital divide of Africa with the rest of the world.

On the second, and final, day of the conference the Minister for Education and Vocational Training in Zanzibar, Hon. Riziki Pembe Juma attended to show support and accentuate the message shared by the Minister of Education, Science and Technology for Tanzania.

Just before wrapping up, GÉANT CEO Erik Huizer managed to attend, as the first ever GÉANT CEO to attend an UbuntuNet-Connect conference. His attendance sparked great enthusiasm across the room, as GÉANT is one of the main partners of the AfricaConnect2 project that supports the UbuntuNet Alliance in the Eastern and Southern African region with high-capacity internet networks. By collaborating with AfricaConnect2, the pan-European GÉANT network strengthens Europe’s links with the African continent and provides African research and education communities with a gateway for global collaborations. Read more about this project on the AfricaConnect2 website.

Curious to learn more about the Tanzanian Research and Education Network or the regional UbuntuNet Alliance? Read more on their respective websites:

<https://www.ternet.or.tz/>
<https://ubuntunet.net/>

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