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Deliverable DN2.1.2: Communications Strategy, Planning, Messaging Report



Deliverable DN2.1.2

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Abstract

This deliverable provides a review of and update on Deliverable DN2.1.1, “Communications Strategy, Planning, and Messaging Report”, which was published in November 2009.

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Executive Summary

The Communication & Promotion Activity (NA2) of the GÉANT project covers marketing communications planning, messaging and implementation at pan-European, global and also national level (through assisting NRENs with their local dissemination). The work encompasses web presences, news and media, materials, events and market outreach, and the Activity's work has broadly followed the strategy set out in Deliverable DN2.1.1, the first iteration of the communications strategy report. This update to the communications strategy reviews the Objectives, Approach, Implementation and Measurement sections of that original document. The main achievements and lessons learned are described, along with any changes that have been made to the strategy in order to make the most of emerging strengths and opportunities, or to address threats or improvements. Since we are now in the final year of GN3, details from the Year 4 work plan are also included, to show the revised strategy being applied during the final year of the project in the run-up to GN3+, and also with Horizon 2020 and the longer-term future in mind. The most significant of these learning points and changes follow. To show the operational context in which they were defined, an overview of NA2's approach and mechanisms is provided in Figure ES.1 on page 4.

Review of Objectives

The objectives of the project and those of the Communication & Promotion Activity have remained the same, although there are some specific operational Year 4 objectives that have helped to shape the Activity going into the final year and in the run-up to GN3+.

- **Project.** The core objective remains to deliver real value and benefit to society by enabling research communities across Europe to transform the way they collaborate on their research.
- **Communication & Promotion Activity.** The Activity's main objective is to develop and implement an integrated project-wide communications strategy for the GÉANT project.
- **Year 4.** A special emphasis is being placed on supporting services adoption and use across relevant audiences, and on further raising the GÉANT profile and enhancing the project's reputation.

Review of Approach

This section summarises the changes to Resourcing, Messaging, Target Audiences and Planning.

- **Resourcing.** Each year has seen an increase in manpower to help NA2 address the increasing need for dissemination assistance across the project. In Year 4, the Activity has some 88 man-months of effort (equivalent to 7.3 full-time people) compared with 46 man-months in Year 1. The extra resource is being used for services marketing, GÉANT PR Network assistance, news and market outreach.

- **Messaging.** The messaging strategy sets out the subjects to be communicated about and their associated messages, forming the building blocks for the GÉANT story. There have been some subtle changes in the overall messages (and these are increasingly being supplemented with messages about the services):
 - Increased promotion of GÉANT as a global hub, supported by increased collaboration with global NREN partners.
 - Messaging updated to reflect developments in the project and its environment, working with the GN3 Project Managers to understand overall project priorities and key developments.
- **Target Audiences.** Some of the audiences have been reached more successfully than others, and of course some are more important than others, but the core changes have been:
 - NRENS: NA2 is working to address NREN-internal communications requirements with respect to GN3 in close collaboration with the Partner Relations team.
 - Users: NA2 is reaching out to more user communities, through relevant messaging, materials, and events representation, and is collaborating closely with the Liaison & Support Activity to achieve this.
 - Political/policy: Increased focus is being placed on politicians, policy makers and funding bodies.
 - Project participants: A review of the internal communications strategy is underway in collaboration with the Project Office, to support project participants with a sense of “team”, keeping them updated with project news and available resources, and reinforcing priorities, key messages and achievements.
 - Global R&E community: Increased efforts are being made to raise GÉANT's profile globally.
- **Planning.** There have been some project-wide changes that will greatly benefit the communications function and how the team operates, namely, the introduction of a Project Management Framework and of a Product Management function. The latter is a result of recognition of the key contribution of marketing to the success of the new services, from product development through to promotion. The growing demand from other Activities to jointly develop and implement communications plans has had an impact on resourcing (see above).

Review of Implementation

This section summarises the changes to Communication Channels and Promotional Tools.

- **Communication Channels.** Amongst the range of channels used for reaching out across the stakeholders, three have seen significant changes:
 - NREN channel to users at national level: There has been increased collaboration with NREN PRs to continue supporting the growing amounts of PR performed about GÉANT by the NRENS.
 - Web-based communication: The addition of social networking to the web channel has already demonstrated the potential for engagement with user communities and other key audiences.
 - Media: NA2 has renewed its focus on aiming for coverage in prominent pan-European publications.
- **Promotional Tools.** Amongst the many promotional tools developed for and used by the project, it is in the branding and market outreach that the most significant changes have occurred:
 - Branding: In consultation with PR Network members and other Activities, NA2 is continuing to make co-branding opportunities available through provision of accessible materials and to make content of value to NRENS available for their re-use, such as joint case studies and services materials aimed at users.

- Market outreach: A more proactive approach is being adopted by the Market Outreach task in response to the need for user-requirements gathering to inform product development and lifecycle management.

NA2 continuously takes on board all feedback from, and responds to the increasing demands of, the other Activities, the NRENs and the project's EC colleagues, in order to maintain the high standard of marketing and communications support that it provides, and ensure it delivers what is needed. In addition, the newly introduced Project Management Framework and strengthening of the project management function, together with the focus on product management, are creating shifts in perspective and approach across the project. These give earlier and better visibility of upcoming needs and activity across the project, further helping NA2 to plan the support required.

In conclusion, communications remains of high importance to an EU co-funded project such as GÉANT, with multiple stakeholders in a geographically distributed environment, multiple "products" to promote, and overall goals whose realisation depends substantially on the European (and global) research and education user base being aware of, and understanding GÉANT, and its associated outputs.

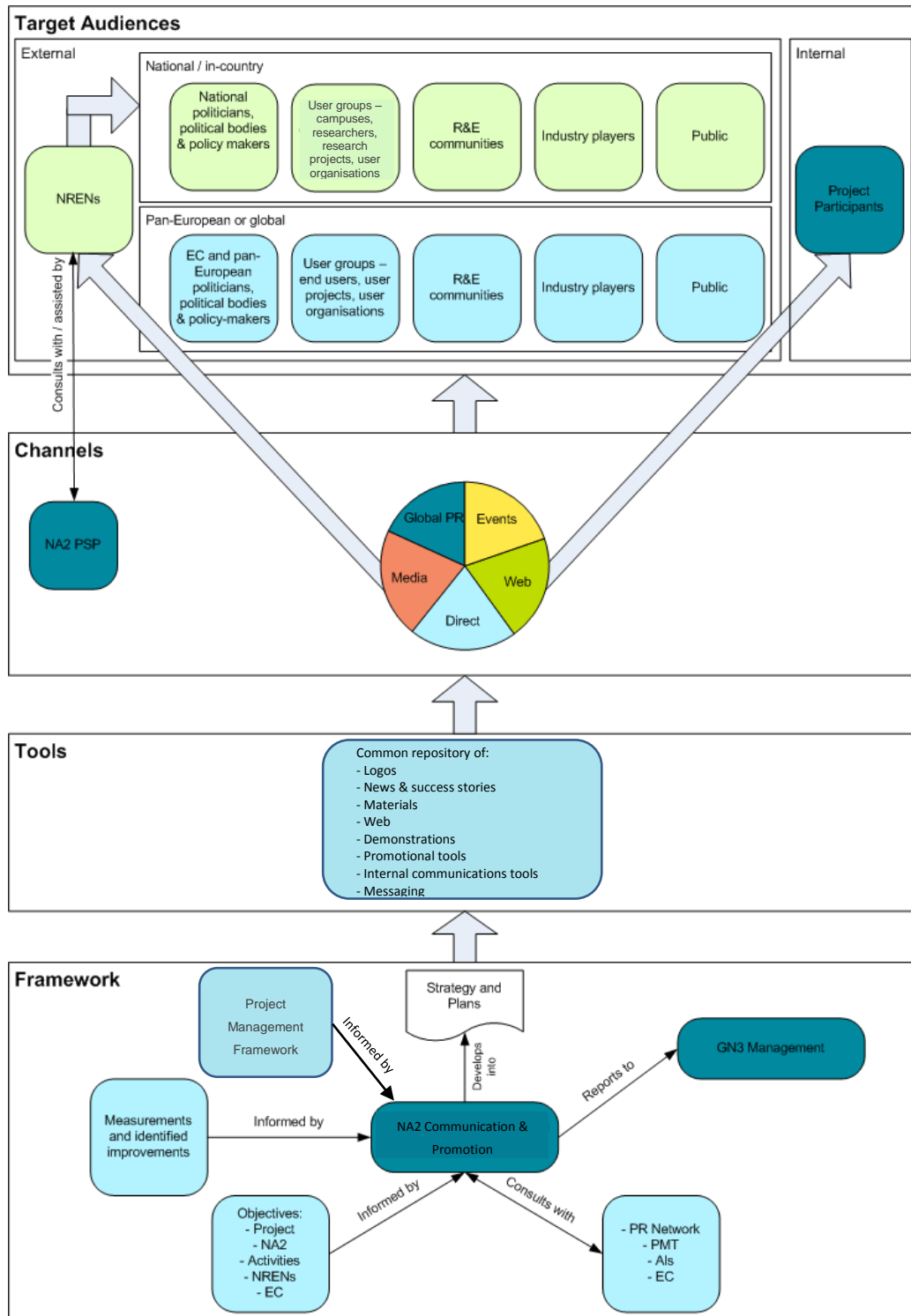


Figure ES.1: Overview of NA2's approach and mechanisms

1 Introduction

This report provides a review of and update on Deliverable DN2.1.1, “Communications Strategy, Planning, Messaging Report” [DN2.1.1], which was published two and a half years ago, in November 2009, by Networking Activity 2 (NA2). At that time the Activity was called “Joint Dissemination and Outreach” but was renamed “Communication & Promotion” during Year 1, since it better describes the purpose of the Activity. That deliverable described the GN3 project’s communications strategy, covering objectives, approach, implementation and measurement in some detail, in response to demand for this level of information.

The Communication & Promotion Activity of the project covers marketing communications planning, messaging and implementation including the National Research and Education Network (NREN) communication channel, web presences, news and media, materials, events, and market outreach. The Activity’s work has broadly followed the strategy set out in Deliverable DN2.1.1 and it is the aim of this report to review, revise and present core changes to that original strategy and its associated objectives, where they have either been introduced or are planned. Thus the objectives, approach, implementation and measurement aspects of the communications strategy are all reviewed, and the main achievements and lessons learned presented. Changes that have been made to the strategy in order to make the most of strengths and harness new opportunities, and to address threats or required improvements, are described. As we are now in the final year of GN3, details from the Year 4 work plan are also included, to show the revised strategy being applied during the final year of the project in the run-up to GN3+, and also with Horizon 2020 and the longer-term future in mind.

The purpose of this deliverable is to perform a review of the communications strategy, not to document the Activity’s progress, since this is well covered in the project’s quarterly and annual reports. Any progress noted will be summary in nature, as part of the strategy review process. So, in short, the deliverable will look at where we are now, lessons learned, and any changes in objectives or approach.

Frequent references to Deliverable DN2.1.1 are made throughout this report and the reader should refer to DN2.1.1 if they wish to become better acquainted with its text and therefore to understand more fully the original strategy.

2 Review of Objectives

As observed in DN2.1.1, the GÉANT project has a basic requirement to communicate and promote the full extent of the network and the project, with its different Activities and services, across all identified target audiences: NRENs, EU institutions, users (institutions, projects, individuals), the research and education community, industry, relevant FP7 (and other) projects, the general public, and the project participants.

Communications objectives must support and help progress the key objectives of the GÉANT project as a whole, as well as those of Communication & Promotion, the Activity responsible for developing and implementing the communications strategy. It is worth stating these two sets of objectives again here, followed by the Year 4 operational objectives, which are also driving the strategy for the remainder of the project.

2.1 Project Objectives

The GÉANT project's key objective is to deliver real value and benefit to society by enabling research communities across Europe (and the world) to transform the way they collaborate on ground-breaking research. The project also aims to expand global collaboration and extend the user base of the GÉANT network and its services. It aims to achieve this through:

- Operating and expanding the European backbone network, interconnecting NRENs through high-bandwidth links.
- Developing and supporting the GÉANT Service Area through a portfolio of advanced, state-of-the-art multi-domain connectivity and network support service options, and a range of end-user application services to ensure seamless network performance.
- Pursuing initiatives targeted at closing the “digital divide” in research and education networking in Europe and investigating emerging technologies that will help shape the future Internet.

These high-level project objectives were set out at the start of the project and are still current, with each being driven by the project's fundamental and enduring principle of meeting user needs.

2.2 Communication & Promotion Activity Objectives

The role of the Communication & Promotion Activity is to assist in the achievement of the project's overall objectives. To this end, its own objectives were defined in the project Technical Annex [TechAnnex] as being to:

- Develop and implement an integrated project-wide communications strategy for outreach and promotion of the GÉANT project (its developments, innovations and achievements), the GÉANT network and its services to identified target audiences, in order to:
 - Generate and increase awareness of and interest in the project, network, services, other activities and results.
 - Promote increased network usage and uptake of services across user communities.
- Provide an internal communications service for project participants to foster inclusion, understanding, cooperation and cross-fertilisation of ideas and opportunities.

For a description of the Communication & Promotion Activity's task list and responsibilities as defined in the Technical Annex, please see Appendix A on page 28.

These objectives for the Communication & Promotion Activity are also still current.

2.3 Objectives for Project Year 4 and Beyond

Whilst the overall project and Communication & Promotion Activity objectives are still valid, the Activity has increased the emphasis it places on selected areas of its work, to better serve the needs of the project as they have evolved over the last three years, and to address opportunities, threats and relative weaknesses in the Activity's achievements. The Activity's Year 4 work plan thus sets out the following operational-level objectives for supporting the project to become more user- and service-oriented:

- Support services adoption and use across relevant audiences with targeted services materials, user-requirements gathering and user (NREN, campus, user community) outreach campaigns.
- Further raise GÉANT profile and enhance reputation, including:
 - Increased targeting of media and analysts (at national and international level), industry and Future Internet projects.
 - Increased focus on global GÉANT dissemination.
 - Promotion of new network solutions including 100 Gbps network.
 - Higher level of dissemination on research and innovation results and activity.

This focus positions the project with key messaging aimed at selected audiences to address identified external opportunities and threats, and also with GN3+ and Horizon 2020 in mind.

- Provide evidence of effectiveness of marketing activities by developing analytics to measure value, and use these to inform future activities.

This focus aims to develop the Measurement, Feedback, Audit and Analysis stages of the marketing process to provide a solid basis for defining future Communications objectives and strategy.

The reasons for these increased emphases are explained in more detail in the reviews of the Approach, Implementation and Measurement aspects of the communications strategy in the forthcoming pages.

3 Review of Approach

This chapter reviews the approach detailed in DN2.1.1, looking in turn at resourcing, messaging, target audiences and planning.

3.1 Resourcing

The level and quality of manpower resource available to the Communication & Promotion Activity of the project is one of the most significant factors affecting the overall performance of the Activity.

Lessons learned, and measures taken to address them, include:

- The amount of resource required to perform marketing and communications activity for the numerous services, tools and other project outputs (such as Campus Best Practice and Environmental Impact) is significantly greater than that required in previous GÉANT projects for more generic “corporate” promotion of the project and the network. Additional manpower has been allocated, year on year, to address the shortfall as demand for dissemination assistance has risen and the size of the workload has increased. The overall manpower budgeted for the Activity in Year 4 is 88 man-months (equivalent to 7.3 full-time people), as compared to 46 man-months in Year 1. Services marketing, PR Network coordination, news, web services and market outreach have all been allocated additional resource in order to achieve the aims of NA2 but also those of the Activities we support and of course, of the project as a whole.
- The close involvement of NRENs and TERENA as participants in NA2 (particularly in Tasks 1 (Strategy, Planning and Messaging) and 7 (Focused Market Outreach), to date), which was previously resourced only from DANTE, has been invaluable to ensure the NRENs’ requirements are better understood and more fully and accurately reflected in NA2’s work and outputs.
- In order to be able to successfully fulfil the project’s communications requirements, the Activity needs to be staffed by experienced and relatively senior communications professionals who are very self-motivated, able to work with little direct supervision, and to thrive in the project’s complex operating environment. Job descriptions for new roles within the Activity, which are open to staff from project partner organisations, have been drafted with this in mind.

- Small, fragmented quantities of resources from project partners as Activity participants tend not to be productive or efficient. This difficulty is being addressed by attempting to recruit participants at a minimum of half-time (i.e. 0.5 FTE).
- Allocating manpower to the NREN PRs so they can be refunded by the project for the cost of the time they spend on GÉANT work within the PR Network is considered by the PRs to be of limited benefit as it does not alter the amount of actual PR resource available within individual NRENs. A small manpower reserve is available within the Activity to NRENs in the PR Network who wish to claim for the time they spend on GÉANT work, but not many claim against it. It is realised, however, that to raise the output level of the PR Network further, a higher level of personal service and tailored assistance to each NREN PR according to their specific needs is required (to be achieved by NA2 undertaking more of an “account management” role). This is in addition to the work already achieved through the GÉANT PR Network meetings, the service-specific working groups, the event support, the collaborations on joint news and case studies, and the individual support given by all members of the NA2 team on request. To this end, a PR Network Coordinator has been appointed to the Activity in Year 4. Further discussion of the PR Network is included in Sections 3.4 *Planning*, 4.1.2 *NREN PRs and Partner Services Promotion* and 5.4 *PSP and NREN Channel*.

3.2 Messaging

The messaging strategy as laid out in Deliverable DN2.1.1 set out the subjects to be communicated about and their associated messages; their combined aim was (and still is) to convey the benefit the project delivers for users. The Activity has been successful during the last three years in incorporating messages about all these subjects in a clear and consistent manner across all of its outputs, ensuring that the project's benefits are clearly communicated to our target audiences.

The project-level subjects were identified for communicating to target audiences, and they continue to form the main building blocks for the GÉANT story and are re-used across the communications of the project to its target audiences – they are included in Appendix B for reference. By contrast, the emphasis on certain aspects of the project has increased in the last year, and the nuancing of others has altered, with greater prominence now being given to the following message areas:

- The global reach of GÉANT.
- Innovation of GÉANT: pushing the state-of-the-art and translating this into a competitive European ICT sector.
- GÉANT as first-choice provider of European connectivity and services.
- GÉANT as first-choice international networking partner.
- GÉANT as key component of Future Internet initiatives.
- Supporting the growth of knowledge communities with world-class, user-focused connectivity and services.
- The network's world-class performance and rapidly increasing utilisation.
- GÉANT's key contribution to the EU's Horizon 2020 vision and the flagship Digital Agenda initiative.
- GÉANT as first-choice partner to other e-Infrastructure projects.

Lessons learned are that:

- The value derived from our messages, and the frequency and consistency with which they are communicated, would be increased still further by stronger communications penetration and coordination across the project. Further comments on this are included in Section 4.1 *Communications Channels* below.
- The general GÉANT project and network messages laid out above are of course supplemented by specific messages for the individual services (for example, for GÉANT IP, perfSONAR MDM, Bandwidth on Demand, eduGAIN and so on). Close collaboration and strong coordination with the other project Activities is needed to ensure maximum mutual benefit is derived from coherent messaging for the GÉANT “corporate” brand and reputation, and for the services, tools, research activities and other Activities/Tasks of the project. The Communication & Promotion Activity has worked (and will continue to work) increasingly closely with the other project Activities, particularly the Service Activities but also with the “value-added services” of the Environmental Impact or “Green” team, the Campus Best Practice group, and the Research Activities to develop and implement dissemination plans and activities to support their respective objectives.
- Project participants’ widespread use of project-specific terminology and acronyms (such as “NA2”) impinges on the successful representation of the project to external audiences. Use of user-friendly terminology for Activities, Tasks and services/products will be encouraged during Year 4 and more firmly implemented in future.

3.3 Target Audiences and Information Needs

The target audiences for the Communication & Promotion Activity are defined in the Technical Annex as the European NRENs; users (institutions and projects), end users (individuals) and user associations; EU politicians and policy makers; the research and education community at large, including other projects and global NRENs; industry players including relevant standards bodies, telecommunications infrastructure and equipment suppliers; relevant FP7 projects; the media and the general public; project participants.

These audiences are borne in mind during the planning and implementation of all of the Activity’s communications work with the result that all of them are reached to some extent. Some parts of these audiences are reached more successfully than others and indeed are more important, but it is intended to reach out more to all groups in Year 4 and the restructure of DANTE will give support to much of this, as well as the ever-improving collaborations within the project.

- **European NRENs.** Communication to the European NRENs as project partners and GÉANT customers is being increased in response to widespread observations (from project participants, from the NRENs themselves, and from discussions in the PR Network) that the NRENs needed to be kept better informed of project progress, and that stronger buy-in needed to be achieved. Communication to, and with, this audience – GEANT’s direct customers – is crucial to the success of the project. The Partner Relations team leads on this area but the Communication & Promotion Activity liaises closely with Partner Relations to coordinate communications effort and messaging.

- **Users.** The project's communications are reaching out to different user communities all the time, through representation at targeted events such as the Future Internet Assembly, EGI conference, EUNIS conference and of course the TNC to reach GÉANT's NREN users; case studies; and user community sections on the project website. This complements and supports the substantial and continually increasing level of NREN communications about the project's services, which are the main channel by which users are reached. For outreach to specific user communities and targeting priority segments of the user audience, the Communication & Promotion Activity works closely with the Liaison & Support Activity.

The "users" audience now also includes schools: many NRENs already serve this community and it is becoming increasingly important to others and therefore the project must take note and include it in the dissemination plans. This is a new area that will be addressed in Year 4.

- **European and national politicians and policy makers.** The strong emphasis on services marketing towards the NRENs and user communities during the last two years has meant that less specific focus has been given to this audience by the NA2 team, although coverage of GÉANT in printed and online publications penetrates this group to a certain extent. In Year 4, this audience will be specifically targeted, in close collaboration with the NRENs for national politicians and officials, to convey more strongly the value of GÉANT in the current austere economic climate, and to highlight its contribution to EU policy objectives in the run-up to GN3+ and with Horizon 2020 in mind. There is a tangible need from some NRENs for support with delivering messages and information to their national funding bodies and decision makers.
- **The global research and education community.** Promotion of the global significance of GÉANT has been the subject of increasing effort over the last two years. For example, building profile in the US is being achieved from promotional collaboration with DICE partners (joint press release on the interoperable Bandwidth on Demand (BoD) and monitoring services; participation in SC10 and SC11 and plans for our own booth at SC12) and ACE (joint dissemination tools, ACE on the GÉANT booth at TNC12). Gaining profile in other regions is being won through increased coordination with the other regional network projects (either direct or via the GÉANT international team). Such promotion is obviously of great interest to the global R&E community. As seen in the previous chapter, raising the global profile of GÉANT is one of the Activity's focal Year 4 objectives and there is a series of initiatives to maximise this.
- **Industry players.** Work is stepping up to develop stronger PR relationships with industry, beyond joint press releases. The first trial of extending this communication was having a booth at the Terabit123 event, which proved valuable, and further representation at selected events, as well as targeting media coverage in relevant publications, will feature in Year 4.
- **Media and general public.** Commissioner Neelie Kroes observed that GÉANT's profile in the media should be higher and, as a result, an increased budget has been reallocated to this specific PR effort to ensure wider distribution and a higher profile of GÉANT news. More comments on the news strategy are included in Chapter 4 *Review of Implementation*.
- **Project participants.** The internal communications requirements of a large, complex project such as GÉANT are proportionately complex. For example, the 450 or so project participants work for at least

34 different organisations and, within these, many work on several projects. This means that securing mindshare and loyalty is not as straightforward as in a multi-national organisation that has direct lines of communication and management. The internal communications service provided during the project to date has not yet seen the success it desired. This aspect of the communications work has been reviewed. See Section 4.1 *Communications Channels* below for more information.

3.4 Planning

Sufficient lead-time for anticipating and preparing for communications outputs is essential to achieving the full potential of the project's communications services. The project Technical Annex recognises that a great deal of coordination with the project's other Activities (Networking, Services and Joint Research), and with the NRENs is required to ensure an integrated approach to the project's dissemination (see Technical Annex Section 1.7.5.2). The Activity's ability to plan is therefore highly dependent on close collaboration with the other project Activities, in a reciprocal relationship.

The introduction of the Project Management Framework (PMF) over the last year is expected to help significantly with planning by increasing the project-wide visibility and coordination of all Activities' work. Examples of further changes introduced over the last two years that also contribute to this are the following: pipeline planning has been assisted by stronger coordination via the Project Office; website development has been assisted by a project-based approach; additional manpower has been allocated to marketing coordination, including planning, to ensure proper resourcing of this aspect. There has been a great deal of liaison and collaboration with Services (and other) Tasks resulting in marketing plans and implementation. Planning in this area has made use of the involvement of PR Network members in services-marketing working groups dedicated to specific services, such as eduroam, eduGAIN and now Bandwidth on Demand, but will be extended to other services.

The PR Network has been developed as a channel (more details in Chapter 4) but discussion within the forum (which is an extended group of PR practitioners (currently 59) from the NRENs, TERENA and DANTE) about the NREN PRs' requirements of the Activity provides valuable input to our planning, for example, highlighting the requirement for greater flexibility of, and ease of access to, materials.

Important lessons that can be taken from the Activity's experience relating to planning are:

- Cross-project collaboration is essential to the success of the project but has taken time to become well-established between Communication & Promotion and other Activities, in part due to the distributed nature of the project's participants, and in part because it required engineers to devote time to marketing (i.e. non-technical) considerations, which is difficult to achieve in an environment where resource is scarce. The importance of collaboration has become well recognised and accepted across the project as a consequence of leadership training provided to Activity and Task Leaders, and discussions in Project Symposia. The Project Management Framework (methodology) now available encourages end-to-end planning and definition of work plans for initiatives (sub-projects) undertaken within GÉANT, which will assist in identifying where Communication & Promotion resource is required during the (sub-)project lifecycle. The Communication & Promotion Activity is already making use of these PMF processes.

- Closely related to the previous point is that awareness and understanding of marketing (and commercial considerations in general) have gradually increased across the project, particularly during the last year. Once again, leadership training and cross-project events such as the Symposium have contributed to this change. This has helped a lot in achieving the collaboration with other Tasks and Activities necessary not just for planning but also for implementation of communications outputs. The Product Management function now introduced will help further, to ensure marketing and dissemination activity is considered and planned throughout the product lifecycle and not just towards the pilot stage. The Communication & Promotion Activity is offering help in more than the dissemination aspects, including user-needs surveys and analysis (see next point); user profiling; and developing “packaging” of the service. The importance of market outreach has been underemphasised in the GN3 project. Timely outreach activity is essential to understand user requirements and ensure they are fed into the planning cycle, and as such is a crucial planning tool. While some requirements for outreach work had previously been conducted by the services teams themselves, NA2’s outreach team has built up experience and expertise with an online survey tool which, as stated in the recommendations of Deliverable DN2.7.1, “Focused Market Outreach” [DN2.7.1], has proved a very useful and effective tool for the information-gathering task. The remit of the Market Outreach Task of the Communication & Promotion Activity is to provide an on-demand outreach service to the project whose potential is able to be more fully realised now that cross-project collaboration is becoming better established. The Task will continue to work in close collaboration with other Activities as required, to coordinate and implement appropriate survey work, including a survey for the project to develop a case study on collaboration between schools being undertaken by International Cooperation Task (NA4 T1).

4 Review of Implementation

4.1 Communications Channels

The communications channels identified in DN2.1.1 were direct to NREN partners, Partner Services Promotion (PSP); global PR collaboration; web-based communication; media; and external events.

These channels are, in general, contributing well to disseminating information about the project. The focus in the review below is on highlighting the main lessons learned and actions taken to address required improvements.

4.1.1 Direct to NREN Partners

As has already been commented in Section 3.3 *Target Audiences and Information Needs*, direct communication to, and with, GÉANT's customers is crucial to the success of the project. The most recent PR Network meeting, hosted by NORDUnet on 22 February 2012 in Copenhagen, identified some communications gaps within NRENs with respect to news and information about GÉANT. Some NREN staff are not receiving the Partner Relations newsletter nor the GÉANT external or internal news mailings. Agreement was gained by PR Network members that they would conduct internal communication within their NREN to address these gaps. Close working between Communication & Promotion and the Partner Relations team is being developed to fully address the requirements of communications to the NREN partners.

4.1.2 NREN PRs and Partner Services Promotion

The six-monthly surveys of the NRENs' GÉANT-related PR activity (see also Chapter 5) show that the level of GÉANT-related dissemination performed by the NREN project partners has increased steadily and significantly over the last two years. This is thanks to a combination of the efforts of the Partner Services Promotion task of NA2, activity within the PR Network forum itself, and the effects of conducting the surveys and reporting their results to the NRENs, which encourages greater levels of PR activity. Much credit is due to SigmaNet, and also GARR, for the achievements relating to the surveys. These efforts are all supported by the increased marketing activity within the team (in close collaboration with the other Activities) as services and tools are got ready for implementation, providing a flow of specific messaging and promotional outputs to NRENs to raise awareness

and encourage take-up. The other Tasks of NA2 of course play a vital role in providing an increasing flow of materials, news, events-involvement information and web content for the NRENs' use.

Services Workshops have become a mainstay in the bi-annual PR Network meetings which enable NREN PRs to assist in the development of messages and dissemination ideas for the project's services. As mentioned in Section 3.1 *Resourcing*, PR Network coordination resource has been allocated in Year 4 dedicated to the objectives of maintaining contact with NREN PRs in between PR Network meetings, building on the momentum and energy stimulated by the face-to-face meetings and ensuring actions agreed at the meetings are followed up and communicated. This will also contribute to providing regular information to the PR Network about new materials, news and copy for the PRs' use, with re-branding and joint-branding opportunities.

4.1.3 Global PR Cooperation

Through closer working with regional network projects such as TEIN, CAREN, RedCLARA, Internet2 and UbuntuNet, and in liaison with the International Cooperation Task (NA4 T1), relationships with marketing communications counterparts in NRENs globally are being strengthened. A major objective of these stronger collaborations is to increase coordination of outputs and ensure a stronger representation of GÉANT amongst the R&E community and other audiences, such as through joint participation at events (e.g. working with Internet2 at SC11), issuing joint press releases (e.g. "High Performance Research Projects Advance Through New Interoperable Transatlantic Network Services" issued 14 November 2011 [PR-14Nov11] and "New Higher-capacity Transatlantic Internet Links Between Europe and the USA To Drive Scientific Research and Collaboration" issued 29 September 2011 [PR-29Sep11]) and writing joint case studies (e.g. "GÉANT and the ShanghAI Lectures – creating a global Artificial Intelligence community" [CS-ShanghAI]).

4.1.4 Web-based Communication

The main points of note in this area are the expansion of the project and services web presences to provide a more comprehensive suite of sites for both public and internal audiences, and the introduction of GÉANT presences on social networking sites for the first time.

- **External Web Presence.** The project's public external web presence has grown significantly since the start of the project, and during the last year in particular with the addition of new sections on Global Collaboration, User Communities, Campus Best Practice, Environmental Impact, 10 Years of GÉANT, and dedicated microsites for perfSONAR MDM, Bandwidth on Demand, AutoBAHN, cNIS, Multi-Domain Service Desk and eduCONF. These additions strengthen the GÉANT web channel but also provide direct channels for the individual services. Overall traffic to the family of public sites increased by more than 50% during Year 3 of the project, with strong interest attracted by the new services sites. The use of temporary "advertising" banners in prominent positions on home pages and landing pages and providing direct click-through to chosen locations have also been very successful in driving traffic to sections we wish to promote in support of ongoing campaigns.

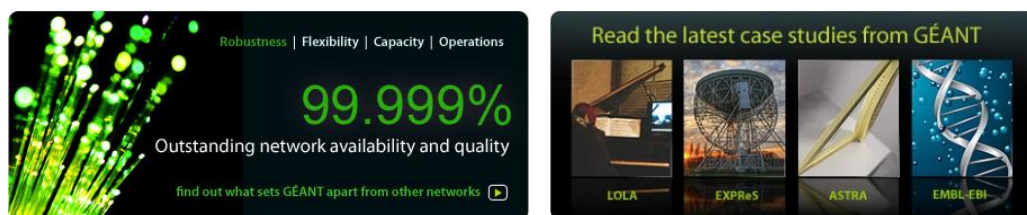


Figure 4.1: Advertising banner examples

- Social networking sites.** These have the potential to transform the online presence of GÉANT and the project's services, due to their ability to raise brand profiles, and also because of their potential to immerse users in the story by arming them with information so they push the GÉANT (or service) messages out themselves. Presences on social networking sites such as YouTube, Facebook and Twitter have been added to the web-based communications channels since DN2.1.1 was written. As well as increasing GÉANT's presence on the web, these are all driving more traffic to the GÉANT public site itself: of sites referring traffic to the GÉANT public site during Year 3, Facebook referred the fifth-largest number of visitors. After an experimental phase, continued use of social networking sites has been integrated into our communications activity and will support targeted campaigns work and outreach to specific user communities and other target audiences in particular. An initiative currently in its early stages, but which we hope to develop further, is collaboration with EGI, TERENA and the eIRG with a view to presenting a "joined-up" e-Infrastructures offering to users, which would make a valuable contribution to the project's perceived offering to users. The discussions are focused primarily on use of social networking as a channel for reaching users.



Figure 4.2: GÉANT presence on YouTube, Twitter and Facebook

4.1.5 Media

Since DN2.1.1 was written, and in line with the limited budget, the Activity has pursued a more community-focused approach to dissemination with a strategy aimed at maximising the use of GÉANT's web-based channels and relationships with partners to increase audience reach, penetration and engagement. This included:

- The use of web stories (published through GÉANT web channels and made available for sharing).

- Developing the web-based Connect newsletter to include stories from partners.

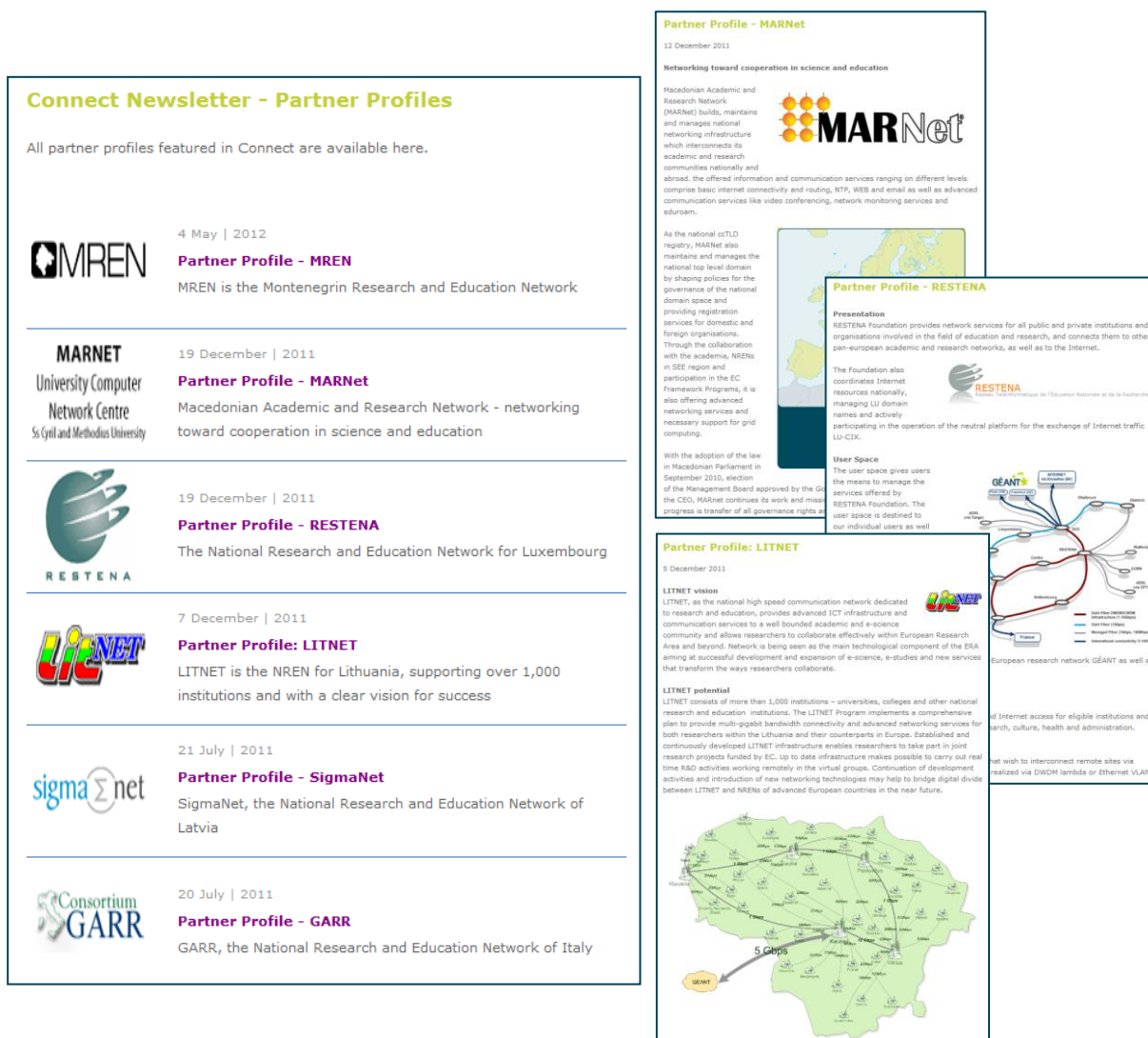


Figure 4.3: Screenshot of Connect newsletter page showing featured partner profiles, with examples

- Disseminating news stories through NRENs' and other community newsletters (including those of e-IRG, RedCLARA, SWITCH, HEAnet, UbuntuNet Alliance and others) and via the NREN PR Network channel.
- Establishing and utilising GÉANT pages on the social networking sites Facebook and Twitter. These social media sites were also used to drive engagement with online audiences, and enabled GÉANT to reach audiences in a variety of ways that may better suit their news-style preference, and also to reach individuals with whom contact had not yet been made, thereby accelerating and increasing the breadth of dissemination. Examples of audiences reached by social media include Anne Glover, Chief Scientific Adviser to José Manuel Barroso, President of @EU_Commission; FI-WARE, who describe themselves as developing a novel service infrastructure for the construction of applications in the Future Internet; Euro-Africa ICT; and AfricaAstronomy.

This strategy has proved successful not only in terms of the overall amount of coverage achieved, particularly in online publications (as reported in the Year 3 annual report for example), but in the level of traffic generated to the GÉANT public site via these social sites. It was understandably less successful at achieving coverage in high-profile quality publications with pan-European readership, such as the Financial Times and New Scientist for example. The low-budget outlets continue to be used but more recently increased emphasis has been put once again on achieving a higher media profile in prominent publications and to this end the budget allocated to news and media in Year 4 has been increased to address this aspect of the media channel.

4.1.6 Events

This channel is working well, with a strong programme of representation at events chosen to target specific user communities and other strategic audiences such as campus users (EUNIS and NREN user conferences), EU politicians and policy makers (ICT, ICRI), Grid projects (EGI User Conference), industry (Terabit Optical Networking) and so on. A Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system would also be very useful for ensuring leads can be more easily captured and shared by all relevant project participants.

4.1.7 Internal Communications

This was not included as a communications channel in DN2.1.1. However the increase in the level of collaboration within the project and the recognition of the need for cohesive cross-project working has highlighted the importance of internal communications. The internal communications newsletter established by the Activity early in the project did not achieve wide readership, although the Activity's involvement in project Symposia and Conventions has been more successful, thanks in part to close working with the Project Office. Indeed the feedback from both events indicates they were very well received by the participants and are judged to have made a tangible difference to engendering team spirit and fostering closer working relationships between individual project members. A separate internal communications strategy is currently in development, and is to be a collaboration with the Project Office and Partner Relations teams, and cover regular news service(s), Symposia and other internal events, and the Intranet. It will aim to provide a standardised communications channel, ensuring messages, information, decisions and changes being introduced are properly cascaded throughout the project, and also supporting horizontal information flow across Activities and Tasks. Increasing project participants' awareness of project messages will have the added benefit of increasing messaging consistency and penetration with external audiences.

4.2 Communications and Promotional Tools

4.2.1 Branding and Visual Identity

Distinctive, attractive branding was established for GÉANT during Year 1 and has since been adopted firmly by the project participants and applied widely in the project's outputs; the GÉANT brand is strong and well-represented. Progress has also been made in services branding, where distinctive branding has been

developed and applied for many of the services, but a consistent visual identity has been applied to templates for materials and web pages which associates the services to GÉANT and to one another. The individual services and the network derive benefit from their membership of this “family” of products.



Figure 4.4: Services branding examples: eduGAIN and perfSONAR web pages, BoD product briefing and eduCONF logo

The NRENs' willingness to promote the GÉANT brand at national and local level has been discussed on several occasions with the PR Network members, and NRENs' individual views on this point vary. The Year 3 survey of GÉANT branding in NRENs' websites [BrandingSurvey] showed that some NRENs feel that promoting the GÉANT brand in addition to their own is confusing for users and undermines their own efforts to raise the (often low) awareness of their own brand with their users. As a result, only 56% of the NRENs (18) include the GÉANT logo on their websites. It is worth noting that, in some cases, the absence of the logo is due to an NREN being restricted in the changes they can make to their website, including the uploading of images (and therefore logos). In addition, the lack of the GÉANT logo does not mean that there is no reference to GÉANT at all: 26 NRENs (81%) do include content about the project on their sites. To ensure there will be

more instances of GÉANT content, materials and branding on NREN websites, NA2 is continuing to develop co-branding opportunities through collaborative news stories, case studies and by creating datasheets that can be co-branded by the NRENs. NA2's new PR Network Coordinator will work with NRENs to gain further penetration of GÉANT branding, and will also of course ensure that the materials and content developed are in line with requirements and are easily accessible.

With the development of joint case studies and press releases with NRENs, and development of services materials for re-use by NRENs to address their end users (e.g. sets for eduroam, eduGAIN and yet-to-come BoD and Campus Best Practice amongst others), these will carry GÉANT branding. In addition, many NRENs use GÉANT materials and promotional gifts as handouts at their user events, and include the project branding and information in their websites and across other materials. In addition, a working group of NREN PRs was established to produce an animated video to promote NRENs' connectivity services – this also carries the GÉANT message and branding and will be used on NREN websites from May 2012.

Finally, discussions about developing branding of the GÉANT Bandwidth on Demand service have shown support for developing a consistent name and identity across Europe for this multi-domain service to be promoted to users. This is currently being developed and over time may influence opinions on the promotion of the GÉANT pan-European brand. The implications of this development for the identity of other multi-domain services have not yet been explored with the NRENs.

4.2.2 Promotional Materials

The extension of the web-based communications channel to include social networking presences increases the value of promotional materials by providing an additional and very penetrating means of publicising them (see Section 4.1.5 above for examples of new audiences reached). Written and video case studies, and sets of services materials (datasheets, product briefings, PowerPoint slides, posters) aimed at NRENs are the main outputs. Sets of services materials for the users are being produced, generally by PSP with PR Network members and, as far as possible, such materials are designed for re-use by the NREN so joint branding is encouraged. Despite the good intentions to make more use of video at the start of the project, this has not yet happened to the extent intended. However, user case studies and an internal address from the GÉANT Project Managers have been well-received by their relevant audiences (for example, the EMBL-EBI video, which is posted on YouTube, has received the second highest number of visits on the GÉANTtv channel with approx. 900) and more use of video is already underway and planned, including an animation to promote connectivity services (planned in collaboration with several NRENs) and also a user case study that an NREN partner is project-managing.

4.2.3 News

External news output has been substantial and can be expected to increase further in Year 4 thanks to improved flow of information within the project but also because the network, services and other Activities are expected to produce more newsworthy achievements for us to publicise. Examples of news stories already planned are shown in Table 4.1 below. A specific push to publish news about project deliverables (or their content) has helped to highlight the project's achievements more strongly.

News Story	Planned Issue Date
Bandwidth on Demand NREN launch	17 May 2012
BoD and Mantychore	18 May 2012
eduroam 10-year anniversary	24 May 2012
Network migration and procurement	May 2012
GreenStar case study and press release	June 2012
eduCONF launch	Summer 2012
BoD launch to users	November 2012

Table 4.1: Planned news stories

News output has a new, important outlet in the social media, which further increases the importance of news as a promotional tool, and its ability to be targeted at specific audiences. User stories, but also news about the new network rollout, are well-suited to make the most of this opportunity and ways of reaching specific audiences via the social media are being explored in tandem with publication of news stories.

5 Review of Measurement

This chapter reviews measurement activity, i.e. discusses what is measured, how, when, and how the results are reported, rather than analysing the results of the measurements taken, although the metrics do in general show positive trends i.e. increasing news coverage, web visitors and so on.

5.1 Web Presences

Website log files are regularly analysed to identify key indicators such as total visitor numbers, trends in page hits, popular downloads, referring sites and search terms. These are reported in the project's quarterly and annual reports but the launch of the family of services microsites during Year 3 provides the basis for more focused use of analytics to measure the effectiveness of targeted service promotion campaigns. Some use of targeted web analytics has been made during Year 3, with successful results, in conjunction with web banners, to drive traffic to chosen pages; more such use of web analytics is planned in Year 4, for example, to direct visitors to key service site pages in support of service take-up.

Data received via the various enquiry and order forms on the web sites, whilst actioned, is not routinely stored or collated currently. This data is valuable and with additional resource allocated to the Activity's Web Communications Task, we will have the resource to get the value out of analysis of the incoming mails in Year 4.

5.2 News and Media

News and Media measurement and monitoring has taken place along the lines described in DN2.1.1, including numbers of press releases and web hits on news stories. The monitoring is reported in project status reports and is used to drive improvements and changes to news strategy such as the renewed emphasis on coverage in prominent pan-European publications described in Section 4.1.5.

5.3 Materials

Quantities of printed materials produced, and hence distributed, are lower than previously due to our policy of encouraging online viewing of information in preference to printed copies for environmental reasons. We continue to monitor quantities of printed materials distributed but downloads of electronic versions of materials from our websites is a more reliable measure of their popularity nowadays, and this metric is of course measured, as is the number of downloads of the videos made available on the project website and on YouTube.

5.4 PSP and NREN Channel

In tandem with the recognition of the importance of the NREN channel as a “route to market”, and addressing this through efforts in the PR Network, regular surveys have been conducted since the start of Year 2 to gather data on the NRENs’ promotional activity about GÉANT, its tools and services. NREN PR surveys have been performed every six months to gather information about the means and extent of GÉANT promotion being carried out by the NRENs. The survey was developed during Year 3 to collect more detailed information about promotion of services.

The surveys have been backed up by reporting the survey results to the NREN PC and developing a “GÉANT Project PR Guide” and suggestions to the NREN PRs as to actions they can implement to promote GÉANT. The guide is available as a resource on the project Intranet [PRGuide]. The surveys show that the level of GÉANT-related dissemination performed by the NREN project partners has increased steadily and significantly over the last 18 months. This is thanks to a combination of the efforts of the Partner Services Promotion task of NA2, the results of activity within the PR Network itself (largely discussions in the twice-yearly meetings), and the effects of conducting the surveys and reporting their results to the NRENs, which themselves encourage greater levels of PR activity.

The NREN PR surveys are a very valuable source of information about the NRENs’ PR activity, and provide a strong positive picture about the amount of PR relating to GÉANT performed at a national level, bearing in mind the very small size of some of the NREN organisations in the project.

5.5 Events

The success of the events programme is measured by some firm metrics such as the numbers of events at which the project is represented, numbers of delegates reached, and where appropriate by delegate feedback questionnaires (for example at the Symposium or other events organised by the project). Measuring the profile and value of participating in such events can be hard to quantify, but a lead management process is now in place to better measure any direct link between a booth visitor becoming a user or other beneficiary of or to the project. This would be assisted by a CRM database to facilitate the lead tracking process through User Support and other teams for follow-up. We are aware that a CRM implementation is under consideration at the project’s Programme level. More anecdotal or subjective information is also very valuable, however, such as qualitative feedback from event attendees or participants, and the quality of contacts made and leads generated from our

presence at an event. The full value of this information will be better realised in future with the increased resource dedicated to reaching user projects in the Liaison & Support Activity Awareness, Marketing Effectiveness and User Requirements.

As observed in DN2.1.1, surveys are probably the only way to assess levels of awareness of the network, its tools and services. A previous user-awareness survey was combined with a user-requirements survey to gather information about users' perceived networking needs. Another such survey is in preparation within the project, whose results will inform GN3+ planning; the NREN PRs, with whom this was discussed in February 2012, expressed a preference for such a survey being conducted with the NRENs as direct customers of GÉANT, who would provide requirements information on behalf of their users.

A broader measure of the value-add of the project's communication and promotional activity is provided by matching information about marketing activity to information about network awareness and usage, service take-up and user lifetime and activity. Whilst a matrix of NREN service take-up has been produced, thorough take-up information relating to the user base beyond the NRENs is not available and so the required matching to marketing activity has not been made. User surveys could capture the required data for the network and services.

6 Conclusions

Marketing communications has a significant role to play in ensuring the GÉANT project achieves its objectives. The communications strategy detailed in Deliverable DN2.1.1 in November 2009 has served well over the last two and a half years, and much of it remains valid still in Year 4 of the project. Despite this, as we have seen, changes have been made to a number of aspects of the strategy, to harness opportunities that have arisen, to address developments in the project's environment and to tackle relative weaknesses in the Activity's performance. The most significant of these learning points and changes include:

- Increased manpower and closer collaborations in response to ever-growing demand for communications assistance.
- The need to involve NREN PRs in internal communications within the project and the NRENs.
- The need to provide the NREN PR Network with dedicated support to facilitate a greater degree of GÉANT-related promotion by the NRENs, including materials and content, co-branded for re-use at national level.
- Growing importance of global recognition and collaboration.
- Support for NA2 with the introduction of project-wide product management and project management functions.
- Social networking gaining importance as a communication channel to engage with different user communities.
- Supporting product development and lifecycle management with a market-survey role.

In conclusion, communications is of high importance to an EU co-funded project such as GÉANT, with multiple stakeholding partners in a geographically distributed environment, multiple "products" to promote, and overall goals whose realisation depends substantially on the European (and global) research and education user base being aware of, and understanding GÉANT, and its associated outputs.

The high-level communications strategy is actually defined during the project preparation phase, and so will soon be in preparation for implementation in GN3+. Thus the strategy defined in DN2.1.1 and reviewed in this report is focused more at the implementation level. The strategy has provided a valuable basis for the communication and promotion work, and has now been reviewed to bring it up to date for the final year of the project.

NA2 continuously takes on board all feedback from, and responds to the increasing demands of, the other Activities, the NRENs and the project's EC colleagues, in order to maintain the high standard of marketing and

communications support that it provides, and ensure it delivers what is needed. In addition, the newly introduced Project Management Framework and strengthening of the project management function, together with the focus on product management, are creating shifts in perspective and approach across the project. These give earlier and better visibility of upcoming needs and activity across the project, further helping NA2 to plan the support required.

Appendix A **NA2 Task List and Responsibilities**

A.1 Task List

The work of the NA2 Activity is divided into the following Tasks:

1. Strategy, Planning and Messaging
2. Partner Services Promotion (PSP)
3. Web-Based Communications
4. Materials – printed and audio/visual
5. Press and New.
6. External Events
7. Focused Market Outreach

A.2 Core Responsibilities

The core responsibilities of NA2 are to:

- Develop and implement communications plans in collaboration with ALs and the PR Network for the project, network, services, JRAs and NAs, in order to generate interest and demand for services across identified (potential and actual) user communities, and awareness of the GÉANT project.
- Support NREN PR-teams to provide effective dissemination strategies in their countries for outreach and service promotion, and in order to promote uptake of GÉANT services.
- Build on the branding policy developed in GN2.
- Promote the GÉANT project, network, services, research and networking activities user a variety of tools including news releases, literature, events, user demonstrations and web services.
- Provide a consistent user-friendly GÉANT web presence to maximise dissemination across all target audiences, and to support the project's internal and external communications.
- Organise external events, including GÉANT-specific events (e.g. launch), and assure representation of GÉANT at other events (e.g. TNC, ICT, EU conferences and workshops).
- Enable and enhance the project's internal communications.

- Promote visibility of GÉANT's contribution towards the EU's research and education goals, including the European Research Area (ERA) and achieving its e-infrastructures vision.
- Perform research and analysis of specific pan-European audiences and market areas, and developing tailored outreach strategies to any particular user group.

Appendix B Project Messages

The intention for the GÉANT messages has been to focus more directly than in previous projects on the end user, and to communicate the benefits and possibilities that the network and services can offer – to researchers, students, academics, teachers and others, their communities, institutions and projects across Europe and beyond.

Project-level subjects to convey to target audiences, as set out in DN2.1.1.

The project-level subjects to talk to our target audiences about are the following GÉANT themes and features. They form the main building blocks for the GÉANT story and will be re-used across the communications of the project to its target audiences.

- The project as a whole
- The GÉANT pan-European network
- Extensive geographic reach
- The advanced services and their capabilities
- The technical research programme
- Collaborative role of the NRENs
- NRENs as service providers at local level through the GÉANT Service Area
- GÉANT's central e-infrastructure role in the EU vision for European Research Area
- User/community benefits of the network and services
- Societal and economic benefits and digital divide initiatives

Project Messages as set out in DN2.1.1.

A number of key messages were set out at the start of Year 1 to support the subjects listed above. These have evolved into the messages laid out in Section 3.2 of this document. Whilst the messages set out here are still valid, they are not the leading messages, but rather the comfortable mainstays of the project.

- Transforming the way researchers collaborate.
- NRENs delivering seamless, high-performance network services to their users.
- Pioneering the future Internet.
- Global capability delivered locally. Empowering user communities.
- High-performance Pan-European research and education network.
- Advanced services to enhance the user experience.
- Connecting researchers across the globe.
- At the heart of the EU vision.

References

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Glossary

ACE	America Connects to Europe
AL	Activity Leader
BoD	Bandwidth on Demand
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
DICE	DANTE, Internet2, CANARIE, ESnet (and USLHCNet.)
EGI	European Grid Infrastructure
eIRG	e-Infrastructure Reflection Group
EMBL-EBI	European Molecular Biology Laboratory's European Bioinformatics Institute
ERA	European Research Area
EUNIS	European University Information Systems association
FP7	EC's Seventh Research and Development Framework Programme
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
ICRI	International Conference on Research Infrastructures
ICT	International Conference on Telecommunications
JRA	Joint Research Activity
NA	Networking Activity
NA2	GN3 Networking Activity 2, Communication & Promotion
NA4	Networking Activity 4, Liaison and Support
NREN	National Research & Education Network
PO	Project Office
PR	Public Relations
PSP	Partner Services Promotion
R&E	Research and Education
SA	Service Activity
TNC	TERENA Networking Conference