NEWS FROM TERENA (137)

TERENA creates new Task Force on Public Relations and Information Dissemination

7 October 2003

In their meeting in Amsterdam on 18 September 2003, the TERENA Executive Committee established a new Task Force to promote collaboration between research and education networking organisations in Europe in the areas of public relations and information dissemination, through activities at the level of PR Manager / Information Officer. TF-PR (Task Force on Public Relations and Information Dissemination) will promote the quality and quantity of public relations and information dissemination about research and education networking in Europe. The Task Force officially started its work on 1 October 2003 with a mandate of two years.

The Terms of Reference of the new Task Force were discussed and finalised at a kick-off meeting of PR Managers and Communications Officers in Amsterdam on 5 September 2003. It was preceded by a seminar session on the previous day in which the results of the recent GÉANT User Survey were presented and discussed. The meeting was attended by 18 persons representing 17 research and education networking organisations from 14 countries. The Task Force's mailing list currently has 87 subscribers from 43 countries. The Task Force is TERENA's first non-technical Task Force and will initially concentrate on six priority work items, with another five to be taken up later. The initial work items include a "news agency" website for and about European research and education networking organisations, best practice in user surveys, best practice in NREN websites, Frequently Asked Questions about research networking, and regular Task Force meetings and seminars. Considerable progress has already been made on the news agency and on the deliverable on best practice in user surveys.

The Task Force will have its next meeting in February. Results and achievements of the first six months of the Task Force will be presented at the TERENA Networking Conference 2004 on Rhodes, Greece in June. A meeting of the Task Force will be held before on the conference on Sunday 6 June, 2004.

More information about TF-PR is available from the TERENA website at

http://www.terena.nl/news/pr/

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Dorte Olesen, UNI·C and TERENA president opened the meeting. She welcomed all the participants and explained the importance of the activities of the proposed task force to TERENA and to the NRENS themselves. The Terms of Reference, amended to reflect the results of the kick-off meeting, will be presented to the TERENA Executive Committee during their meeting in Amsterdam on 18 September and the new task force, TF-PR will be created with a two-year mandate.

Thursday afternoon was dedicated to a presentation of the recent GÉANT User Survey (http://www.dante.net/geant/public-deliverables/GEA-03-114.pdf). Sarah Ball of PRODATA presented the methodology and results of the survey (http://www.terena.nl/news/pr/prodata.ppt).

Dale Robertson of DANTE provided a brief presentation about the need to follow up on the survey's findings (http://www.terena.nl/news/pr/geant-actions.pdf).

The business part of the meeting began on Friday morning with a welcome from TERENA's Secretary General, Karel Vietsch. Karel outlined the role and structure of TERENA Task Forces and explained how TF-PR will be created and how it will operate. He stressed that historically, PR and communications have not been given a high priority in the NRENs, but this was changing fast and the need for better communication is being felt throughout the NRENs as well as for European Projects.

Karel stressed that it is very important for us to give priority to the planned deliverables that can show some definite results within six months to a year, in order to demonstrate to the management of our organisations that our work is beneficial. This will result in support for our work in terms of making time and travel funds available for the active members of the initiative and will also encourage other NRENs to participate.

Mariska Herweijer, interim chair person of the Task Force, did a quick run-through of the proposed deliverables and then gave everyone an opportunity to comment. The consensus was that we should review each proposed deliverable and set priorities, establish time frames and determine who will be responsible for each deliverable and who will assist. The list below is not cast in bronze, and volunteers from among those of you who were unable to attend the meeting will be most welcome.

The list of deliverables will be amended [action 2] to reflect our decisions and will be published on the website as well as presented to the TEC on 18 September for their approval.

A: TF-PR Website (Carol de Groot and Jeroen Houben)
The website is now active.

B: TF-PR Workshops (Carol de Groot, Mariska Herweijer)
The first workshop sessions were held in conjunction with this meeting
1/ report of the GEANT User Survey
2/ presentations by Drempels Weg on accessibility of websites

Workshop sessions are planned for all TF-PR meetings. The workshop in February will include a presentation by Jeroen Houben on "best practice" websites" and the re-building of the TERENA website. [action 5}. Other presentations by TF_PR members and invited speakers will also be planned. [action 6].

C: News Agency for and about European Research and Education Networking (Patricia Soria and Russell Nelson

In the first phase of this plan, the website will be closed and only available for uploading and for use by the members of TF-PR. It will be structured like a news agency (Reuters, AP). All information posted may be used by anyone who is allowed access. Plans are well under way and this news service will be available for use well in advance of the target deadline of 1 January [action 7]. A report on the first phase will be presented at the February meeting [action 8]

An address list for the distribution of print materials to the TF-PR list will be prepared and put on the website [action 9]

D: Best Practice for User Surveys: (Mariska Herweijer, Zoran Birmisa)

Case Studies will be prepared of surveys done as an example for TF-PR members. These will include a description of the information needed by the NREN, the methodology used, the questions asked, a summary of the results and a brief description of the action taken as a result. These will be published on the TF-PR website.

Leaders of this deliverable will also request case studies from others who have prepared user surveys: BELNET, EENet, RENATER and others. Some of these may be presented at the February meeting [action10].

E: Best Practice Websites: (Gitte Kudsk, Sandra Passchier)

A start was made at this meeting with the presentation by Drempels Weg of the importance of making our websites accessible to the handicapped and of encouraging the users of the NRENs to do the same by giving them both the inspiration and the tools to do this.

The most important instructions on how to do this (from W3C), set out in an easily usable way, are available on the Drempels Weg Website in Dutch. These are to be translated into English and published on the TF-PR website. [action 11].

There will be a presentation about the re-building of the TERENA website at the February meeting.

The leaders of the deliverable will look at the current websites of the NRENs and make an assessment, for a report to be given at the next meeting, and will also prepare a report/presentation at this time [action 12].

F: FAQ Page (Celine Morris, James Bell)

This deliverable was considered to be a very important, very high-profile one that will be of immediate use to members. The leaders will make an inventory of available information, including that already available from Internet2 and will begin to prepare our FAQ page. They will begin by asking members to send in their faq pages.

They should put an e-mail link on the page so that users can send in new questions that can be answered and added to the page. [action 13].

G: Glossary of Terms (James Bell and Celine Morris)

In the first instance, the leaders of this deliverable will make an inventory of currently available glossaries from the NREN websites, from the Task Force websites, from Internet2 and from other outside sources. The initial page on our website will be pointers to these glossaries. This will be prepared before the next meeting, and we will then determine the best way forward [action 14].

H: Information Sheets (Mariska Herweiijer and Carol de Groot)

A great many of these are already published by members of our group (SURFnet, UKERNA, Internet2 etc.). The group leaders will inventory available resources and prepare a web page by the end of the year where these can be listed and made available for use by the members of the group [action 15].

I: What's Done in European Research Networking (Michal Krsek, Maria Ristkok)

This is a large and difficult project but there may well be a simpler solution than many had thought. The leaders will come to the February meeting with a concrete proposal. [action 16]
J: Who's Who in European Education and Research Networking (Maria Ristkok)

Several participants pointed out that people in their organisations do not want this information published. The leader of the deliverable will assess this problem to determine if this is a sufficiently large percentage of our community to prevent the publication from being a useful resource. The matter will be discussed further during the next meeting. [action 17]

It was stressed that this publication would have to include the people involved in projects at universities and research institutions as well as employees of NRENs, as in many countries, research is dome outside the NREN itself.

K: A database of the documents, photos and information about the history and development of European Education and Research Networking (Carol de Groot)

While the group agreed that this project could provide useful information and resources for the members, and that it is important not to let the information, documents, photos etc be lost, it was agreed that this project is outside the resources of the group at this time and that it will be looked at, at a later date.

Participants were encouraged to begin to assemble and store the information and documents of their organisation safely for future action.

After the lunch break Greg Wood from Internet2 gave a presentation about the communication activities of his organization. Although the role of Internet2 is slightly different from European NRNs (Internet2 is the upstream provider for regional networks and does not connect individual institutions), Greg presented some pr actions that could be interesting for NRNs. For example Internet2 has set up the land speed record that stimulates network engineers worldwide to set new speed records while at the same time making advanced networking more tangible for the general public. Furthermore, Internet2 has put a lot of effort in establishing relations with leading scientists that use advanced networking in their work. These so-called 'hero's' are used to promote networking within their own academic community. More information can be found in the slides of the presentation.

Despite traffic problems which caused some problems with the presentation, the participants were impressed and inspired by presentations from Jacko van Dijk and Paul Erkins of Drempels Weg. Action items as a result of the presentations are included in the revised Terms of Reference and action items from this meeting.

Participants agreed that the atmosphere of the meeting and the contacts among participants indicate that we will have begun an undertaking that will be a lot of work that will accomplish a great deal, and will also be fun and interesting. We encourage all of you were unable to attend to watch for the announcements of the February meeting and make plans to join us (perhaps in Brussels).

Carol de Groot
Secretary to TF-PR