

Espoo e-IRG workshop summary

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The Finnish presidency e-IRG workshop was held on the 4th and 5th of October 2006 in Espoo, Finland. The meeting was hosted by the Finnish IT center for science (CSC) and gathered around 75 participants in its plenary and parallel sessions.

The workshop had two main objectives: On one hand to gather feedback for the next version of the e-IRG roadmap; on the other hand it was intended to generate ideas and feedback for the next version of the e-IRG White Paper. More emphasis was given on the roadmap and its long-term scope, as the previous presidency dealt mainly with the White paper. In general both the plenary and all the parallel session tracks were well attended. This document focuses on the White paper sessions only, which were called “*Future Topics for e-IRG - Parallel Sessions*”.

Themes in the plenary sessions

There were certain themes and topics of discussions that were touched upon several times – some of them were new, others had perhaps more emphasis than before. Naturally the imminent start of the 7th Framework programme was of great interest, but also issues related to industrial participation, supercomputing (especially funding models for world-class installations), sustainability of the infrastructure (including “soft” issues such as data curation), innovation policies and legal issues were mentioned several times. The role of the e-IRG in these areas was discussed, especially in the context of the sustainability.

The invited plenary presentations also reflected the evolving challenges of the e-Infrastructure (and thus also e-IRG): Timo Skyttä (Nokia) presented the industry-backed and widely deployed Liberty Alliance approach for federated identity management¹, David Giaretta (CASPAR) outlined the challenges of long-term curation of the data and Christoph Witzig (Switch) presented challenges and some of the solutions related to scaling of the AAI systems from few thousands to hundred thousands of users.

Parallel sessions

The second day of the workshop was dedicated to parallel sessions that proceeded in four streams. The time before lunch was dedicated to roadmap sessions, while the afternoon for the Future (White Paper) topics sessions.

Future topics (White Paper) sessions

Two of the groups had used the e-IRG wiki to prepare for the sessions in advance and also to continue the collaboration after the workshop. This successful use of collaborative tools is even more remarkable in light of the relative short lead-time to the workshop and slow response times of the session chairmen. The four topics were selected based on the expressions of interest from the e-IRG White Paper section editors. The sessions were the

¹ Where perhaps one of the most important policy related issues was the information that several e-IRG member states have mandated the use of Liberty-compliant solutions in their governmental single sign-on solutions.

following: Networking; Education, training and support; Allocation, Resource Sharing, Accounting; and Supercomputing. The session on incident handling did not take place (see last paragraph).

Networking session

The issues discussed during the networking session were divided into three categories:

- Operation of the research networks – state of the art, service provision and user support
- Governance of the research networks – organisational structure, policy goals and funding
- Development of the research networks – global role, uniform coverage (“digital divide”), collaboration.

The session identified several complementary activities that e-IRG could benefit from, such as Terena’s EARNEST activity and various JRA’s of the GÉANT2 project. In general, the consensus was that the research networks are in excellent state today, due to intense efforts during the past 20 years. In order to maintain this situation the networks need continuous development in collaboration with advanced user groups – without forgetting the everyday needs of the basic users. Homogenising the national policies would be also of great importance. In addition, sustainable funding would be needed for persistently keeping the leading edge status of the research network infrastructure. The involvement of industrial partners in the pre-competitive phase of advanced research projects using the research network has been considered desirable and acceptable by the participants

Suggested next steps included closer cooperation of the e-IRG with the GEANT NREN-PC, DANTE, TERENA, as well as the ENPG (European Network Policy Group).

Education, training and support session

The education and training group used the wiki both before and after the meeting to continue discussion. Some of the novel issues that were uncovered this way were:

- Launch of the EU-funded ICEAGE project
- Establishment of the Open Grid Forum Education and Training working group (ET-WG). The participants recommended that e-IRG members interested in education and training would join the ET-WG
- The user support is closely tied to the allocation and accounting issues – it is possible that in the near future user support will be the biggest cost of the whole e-Infrastructure

The group also discussed the differences and similarities between training and user support – with education there are more degrees of freedom and diverse technology base can be beneficial as a way to promote deeper understanding. However, at the same time one should ensure that the training prepares the students to operate in the actual production infrastructure. Thus the training and support organisations need to communicate frequently.

Allocation, Resource sharing session

This session focused more on getting feedback on the outcome of the Austrian presidency White paper session, as this was expressed by the corresponding recommendation. Most of the session, dealt with getting feedback and then wrapping up the recommendation. There were comments that the recommendation's approach was very good, but there was a lack of concrete measures. This should be followed up in the next semester and if possible, -given the different approaches in the involved technologies and approaches-, some more concrete measures should be identified.

Supercomputing session

The sessions concentrated on the following six issues:

- How to balance support to European supercomputer industry and the scientific requirements for various architectures
- How to anticipate on the growing power consumption problems
- Invest in scalable software
- Involvement of “smaller” countries in the HPC discussion
- Dissemination of the ways HPC brings added value to the Europe as a society
- HPC and supercomputers are an integral part of the European Science Grid and supercomputers are to be seamlessly integrated in the e-infrastructure

Several of these topics brought on the importance of novel ways of industrial collaboration, better utilisation of research results (including “niche” areas) and transparent access to supercomputing resources.

Incident handling

During the Austrian presidency it was proposed as a topic the area of incident handling in e-Infrastructures. This topic was intended to tackle incident handling in the Grid arena, which is a relatively new area, and investigate common approaches with the research networking area and the national incident response teams, that it is a common practise in Europe and beyond. Due to unforeseen conditions, this topic was not covered during the workshop, although it was initially included in the programme. We would like to apologise publicly to the conveners of this session. The topic could be handled in the next presidencies.