



« *networking the networkers* »

PRESS RELEASE

FEAST Project begins with request for input from stakeholders

Stakeholders invited to participate in feasibility study into extending African research networks

29 January 2009, Amsterdam, NL:

Potential stakeholders are invited to contribute to a new study on the viability of interconnecting existing African research and education networking infrastructures and connecting them to the European backbone network, GÉANT. The feasibility study (FEAST) team welcomes contact from interested politicians, telecommunications regulators, heads of research and education institutes and other relevant stakeholders in the region, as well as from European NRENs wishing to support the initiative.

The ten-month study will run until October 2009. The European Commission (EC) has awarded a contract to the Swedish Royal Institute of Technology, KTH, and its supporting partners TERENA and DANTE to carry out the project. Several European NRENs have pledged their support to the project, as has the Italy-based International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP).

A major objective of FEAST is to work with key stakeholders to provide the EC with recommendations about the implementation of a sustainable and extensible regional backbone network dedicated to NRENs in sub-Saharan Africa. The actual deployment of such a network is the goal of another project, called AfricaConnect, which is being supported by the EC in collaboration with the African Union Commission (AUC). Under this programme, which will build on the FEAST recommendations, sub-Saharan NRENs (except the South African network) are eligible for AUC-EC support, including capacity building and investments in links and network elements for the regional backbone.

“Research networks now link the globe, enabling truly worldwide collaboration between scientists and researchers wherever they are located,” said Dai Davies, general manager, DANTE. “Sub-Saharan Africa is one of the last unconnected areas, making this feasibility study and the AfricaConnect project vital for bridging the digital divide and enabling high speed African participation in regional and global projects.”

AfricaConnect will provide the sub-Saharan NRENs with higher capacity transit to the general commercial Internet as well as access to research and education resources and peers around the globe. Sub-Saharan Africa is the last part of the world to join this world-wide community. Local ownership, from the institutional level and up, as well as compatibility of use and connection policies in the global context are all important factors in the planning of AfricaConnect.

These developments come in the context of changes in the African communications markets: a rapidly emerging terrestrial fibre market is leading to a transition from a high price, low volume market to a low price, high volume market. However, sub-Saharan research and education institutions still get less than one per cent of the Internet capacity that their European peers can use at the same cost.

details overleaf:

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FURTHER INFORMATION

The **FEAST** project website is:
www.feast-project.org.

To support FEAST or to receive information updates about the project, please send an email to:
interest@feast-project.org.

FEAST is being carried out by a partnership of DANTE, TERENA and KTH, which is the main contractor.

KTH

Sweden's Royal Institute of Technology (Kungliga Tekniska högskolan) has a long experience of working with African institutions and of Internet working in Africa, including campus networks, Internet Exchange Points and policies for infrastructure sharing.

www.kth.se/?l=en_UK

DANTE

Delivery of Advanced Network Technology to Europe Ltd. is the organisation that operates GÉANT, the high-bandwidth, pan-European research network, and has also supported the establishment of similar regional backbone networks in Asia and Latin America.

www.dante.net

TERENA

The Trans-European Research and Education Networking Association is the association in which Europe's research networking organisations, research institutes, equipment vendors and telecommunications operators can meet, exchange information and experience, and collaborate on a range of activities.

www.terena.org

AfricaConnect is the first of 19 'Lighthouse Projects', which are part of a partnership programme between the European Commission and the African Union Commission.

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