Conference and event reports

Review motivates EGEE-II: project ready for next phase

In early July, project members of Enabling Grids for E-sciencE (EGEE) met in the CERN council chambers for the EGEE-II project's final review. Five reviewers – specialists in information technology nominated by the European Commission – attended the event. Project reviews are carried out annually to assess the project's performance and progress, and to give the consortium specific commendation and recommendations.

By all accounts the review was a success. Reviewer John Martin described it as "outstanding." He says that all of the reviewers were particularly impressed by the openness, transparency and responsiveness of the project. They commended it on consistently meeting and exceeding its targets. The reviewers noted the progress on application support and say that the degree to which the project has been able to contact and understand the needs of the user community is remarkable. They also note the risks in taking certain decisions, such as to restructure the gLite

middleware halfway through the project's lifetime and using ETICS as the sole build system, and they say that these risks have been vindicated by the outcome.

In the reviewer's final report the project earned the highest marks in every category. However, says Anna Cook, head of administration for EGEE, this was not a surprise: "We expected it to go well. We'd worked very hard in our preparations. The secret to this success was our hard work during the past year and our follow-up on their recommendations from the previous review. It's nice to have both praise and areas for development."

One of the suggestions from the previous review (June 2007) had been to strike a balance between stable operations and innovation. Striving for this, the project focused on stabilizing the infrastructure and moving applications from prototype phase to use in day-to-day research.

What effect has Cook seen this most recent review have on the project? "The need for summer holidays," she said,

laughing. "What was nice about the review was that we received endorsement from our reviewers for our future plans. Being told that we're on the right track has given us all some extra enthusiasm."

Now in its third phase, for the next two years EGEE will focus on expanding and optimizing the Grid infrastructure through support for more user communities, and adding more computational and data resources. The grand challenge will be preparing for the migration of the existing production European Grid from a project-based model to a sustainable federated infrastructure based on National Grid Initiatives. The project hopes for another "outstanding" final review in two year's time.

At CERN, 77 people currently work on EGEE. The project is a fundamental part of the LHC Computing Grid. The LCG uses EGEE's gLite middleware and many EGEE-managed resources.

Danielle Venton, IT-EGE
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openlab's summer programme for students promotes high tech in a multicultural setting

Since its creation in 2003, CERN openlab – a framework for partnership with industry – has welcomed students in computer science or physics every summer to work on cutting-edge Grid technology projects and other advanced openlab-related topics. This year the programme accepted 13 students from 12 countries (China, Colombia, Croatia, France, Greece, Pakistan, Poland, Romania, Russia, South Africa, Spain and the USA) for two months, during the period June to September. The students were funded jointly by CERN openlab, two of its partners (Oracle and Intel) and the students' home universities.

The students worked on very diverse topics and were fully integrated into the openlab-related projects. The summer student programme is valued by both the students, who are given a chance to work in a highly demanding and leading-edge environment, and the CERN teams, who consider the students' work to be an asset to the technical part of their projects.

Sverre Jarp, openlab CTO responsible for the summer student programme, tailored a dedicated and enriching schedule including

The openlab summer students from around the world, in the CERN Computer Centre.

a series of nine lectures, given by CERN and external experts. The key topics covered were Grid overview and gLite details, server hardware, virtualization, compilers, secure software creation, computer architecture and performance optimization, LHC Computing Grid, networking and Oracle database architecture. Sverre explained: "In addition to their work in the various

CERN groups, we aim to give the students an overview of the current technologies that we use and also to introduce them to other activities at CERN."

In line with this spirit, visits were organized to the CERN Control Centre, ATLAS, LINAC 2 and the Anti-matter Factory. There was also a one-day trip to EPFL in Lausanne, where the students were able to attend presentations on information technology projects, such as biocomputing and environmental monitoring.

At the end of the summer, participants submit a written report, which can result in wider publication. However, for some this first experience at CERN is just a prelude to a longer collaboration. Although this is not its main purpose, the openlab summer student programme has also proved to be successful at convincing a few of these talented students to come back. Two of the current openlab team members first came to CERN as openlab summer students.

Useful link
http://cern.ch/openlab
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