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Deliverable D2.1

Project Communications Strategy and Plan

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Abstract

This deliverable describes the communications strategy and plan for M1-M23 of GN4-3.

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Executive Summary

This deliverable describes the communications strategy and plan for M1-M23 of GN4-3.

Continuing from the progress made in GN4-2, the document provides the strategic context that the communications strategy and plan is built on and details the key communication aspects that were considered in devising the communications plan.

Actions identified in the plan will be tracked on an ongoing basis and their success measured against the Key Performance Indicators set for the Task. Progress towards objectives will be monitored and reported on a regular basis.

1 Introduction

Informed by the goals set for GN4-2 and GN4-3 in the project's Description of Work (DoW), the marketing and communications strategy and plan continues to address the project's different stakeholders and their requirements, with integrated, consistent communications that target audiences through coordinated channels, with consistent messaging and impactful content.

Following the strategic direction set for GN4-3, this document sets out the communications strategy Task 1 has devised to progress and enhance the work it started in GN4-2 (see Section 2).

The communication plan the Task has compiled is based on the communication strategy and key communication aspects as well as stakeholder impact were considered in putting the plan together (see Section 3).

To track progress against the communications plan, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) have been agreed, which the Task will monitor on a regular basis (see Section 4).

The document concludes by summarising the key approaches required to succeed in meeting its objectives and how it hopes to further progress its efforts (see Section 5).

2 Project Communications Strategy

The GN4-2 Description of Work included the following objective:

'The overall FPA objective for the GÉANT Partnership is to contribute to the effective European Research Area by making Europe the best-connected region in the world. GÉANT must offer European researchers the network, communications facilities and application access that ensure the digital continuum necessary to allow them to conduct world-class research in collaboration with their peers around the world.'

The GN4-3 DoW continues to pursue this objective and adds some supplementary objectives that are also relevant to project communications:

- 03 *'Support the GÉANT partners in their mission to offer the research and education community the best e-infrastructure environment possible to further their research and education activities.'*
- 05 *'Engage and contribute with services and expertise to other EC programmes where relevant and feasible.'*
- 06 *'Maintain and strengthen GÉANT's position and reputation in other world regions.'*

Informed by the above, the marketing communications strategy aims to raise awareness of the project, its activities and ambitions, as well as the network and services, and highlight the impact these have on the research and education community. This should be done through clear messaging and positioning statements, the production and publishing of engaging content to address key stakeholders, and communication delivery through integrated, measurable and collaborative channels.

WP2's communications, marketing and events service has continued to develop and evolve over the years and has proved itself to be an effective and valuable resource. It is also responsible for building and maintaining the GÉANT name and reputation.

Over successive GÉANT projects, the WP2 team has established effective communication channels with which to maximise the reach of the messages and content to a wide range of GÉANT stakeholder communities. Examples include the GÉANT website and services microsites, news stories and the flagship CONNECT magazine, event participation (e.g. SuperComputing, ICT, ICRI, DI4R etc.) and joint promotions with NRENs, a growing email distribution list and weekly newsletter, and a social media approach that targets all stakeholders. Furthermore, the TNC event organised by GÉANT and partner NRENs routinely attracts over 700 attendees, with several thousand watching streamed content online.

WP2 will nurture its relationships and collaborate with other groups to make use of additional channels, such as the Global PR Network’s “In the Field” blog, the Science Node weekly newsletter, stakeholder joint collaborations, EC websites, featured opportunities and social media, and, of course, the partners’ own dissemination of information across all their channels. WP2 will continue to use tools to monitor/measure the impact of the communications to ensure they are relevant, targeted and cost-effective.

WP1 has a core role to coordinate the project’s activities, and to ensure communication of progress, results and, importantly, of tools and information in order for participants and partners to be able to fully contribute to and benefit from the outputs and success of GN4-3. This includes an internal communications programme, aided by WP2 and the other work packages, as required, the core of which include the weekly newsletter, the annual project Symposium working conference and the intranet for sharing progress and updates.

WP2 works closely with the other work packages, in particular with WP3, to develop and implement communications plans that will enable dissemination and promotion, as well as allow dialogue with and feedback from the stakeholder groups. For example, the growing reach of GÉANT’s social media channels, alongside the web presences, supports ‘likes’, re-tweets, sharing and incoming enquiries by individuals across all stakeholder groups. Event participation provides opportunities to engage with stakeholder groups and to obtain their comments and input for consideration. A mixture of conventional and digital marketing materials is deployed, and news stories and channels are carefully developed to ensure each stakeholder group is catered for in the most appropriate manner.

WP3 actively engages with the user communities to build solutions comprising services and expertise to match user needs and supports “co-creation”, forming user groups to gather feedback on user experience of current services and working to gain insight into users’ future requirements – all which provides intelligence for the work packages that help define new features or service ideas. Through attending and hosting user meetings, WP2 manages communications to help the project assess service development in response to the evolving needs of the e-community.

To continue the progress achieved in GN4-2, Task 1 has identified a number of objectives and actions for M1 – M23. These will be accomplished by building on the twin track approach employed in previous projects, an approach that separates ‘features’ and ‘benefits’ to address different stakeholders with the most appropriate and compelling content and deliver this through targeted channels.

The Task will continue to work closely with the other Work Packages, with project partners and participants, and with other stakeholders to ensure the widest reach.

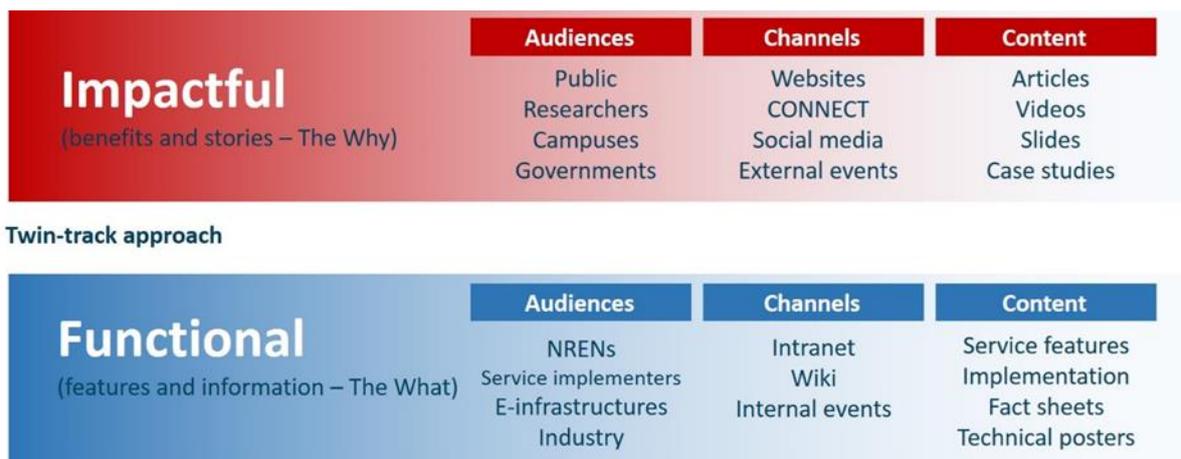


Figure 2.1: Twin track approach

As an integral part of its work, each work package of GN4-3 and GN4-3N will disseminate its results to relevant audiences, in coordination with the Support WPs (WP1, WP2, WP3). This will include:

- Presentations.
- Training and knowledge-sharing at meetings and conferences.
- Issuing news stories, use studies and service documentation.
- E-infrastructure integration projects and suppliers through operational collaborations with, for example, international networking organisations.

As the new fibre footprint is made available by the GN4-3N project and passed on to the GN4-3 project for operations and support, the dissemination effort will be adapted to include the new opportunities offered to the countries with newly established 100 Gbps fibre connectivity.

A core role of WP2 *Marketing, Communications and Events* is to disseminate and promote the results and output of the project across the stakeholder communities through external and internal communication strategies and actions, helping to increase the success and adoption of services. To ensure partner involvement, this work is carried out in collaboration with WP3 *User and Stakeholder Engagement*.

The Marcoms communications strategy informs the communications plan, which is detailed in the next section.

3 Project Communications Plan

Focussing on a set of objectives (see Section 3.2) that have been informed by the strategy, the communications plan defines the information dissemination required to meet these objectives:

- What information needs to be disseminated?
- Who does it need to be delivered to?
- When should it be delivered?
- Which communication channels should be used?

The success of actions is measured against Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

3.1 Strategic Considerations

In putting together the marketing communications plan, Task 1 has followed the devised strategy by considering key communication aspects. These are the audience that need to be addressed, which channels are appropriate for addressing the different audiences, what messaging approach will deliver the best results, how content is conveyed most effectively and how stakeholder engagement can be ensured.

3.1.1 Audiences

The GÉANT project has a diverse range of audiences, including:

- project partners (European NRENs)
- project participants
- research communities
- campuses
- the European Commission
- national governments
- global partners
- industry
- the public

These audiences have different interests, different requirements for information and levels of engagement, and will often get their information from different communications channels.

3.1.2 Channels

Reaching the project audiences requires a range of communication channels that cater for different types of content and consumption. For example, a detailed description of eduroam and how to set it up for an institution will require a very different approach to raising awareness of an eduroam campaign.

The project therefore uses different channels for different purposes. Channels employed include:

- web presences (e.g. geant.org; impact.geant.org; blog.geant.org; eduGAIN.geant.org etc.)
- two weekly newsletters (GÉANT Project Office news from the PMO for participants, PeaR weekly newsletter subscribed to by a wide range of audiences)
- the flagship CONNECT magazine
- social media to raise awareness, engage with audiences, and drive traffic to web presences

Throughout GN4-2 significant progress was made in improving the project's communications channels, not just ensuring they were optimised for mobile devices and with a stronger focus on design, but also delivering several new websites for specific audiences, and tailoring content for the increasing use of social media. This approach in turn is supporting outreach teams and promoting service uptake. In GN4-3 the approach is to streamline, and better integrate these channels for greater impact and efficiency.

3.1.3 Messaging

A consistent approach to messaging helps to ensure the project and its activities are positioned correctly and seen as supporting wider initiatives, as well as building trust with stakeholders. The Task will continue to work with the Project Management Office (PMO) and with Work Package Leaders to develop project-wide messaging.

The Task considers that grouping the project's wide range of activities into a number of key areas (networking, trust and identity, cloud services, community, and research engagement) will support this positioning.

In particular, the areas of networking, trust and identity, and cloud services are central to Open Science and messaging will support the high-level GÉANT objectives and positioning of the project within the EOSC, EDI and Horizon 2020 landscape.

The community area covers such initiatives as TNC, the Task Forces and Special Interest Groups that foster innovation, and the Learning and Development work.

And the research engagement area highlights the positive impact of GÉANT and the NREs on science, innovation and education – supporting the outreach efforts of Work Package 3 User & Stakeholder Engagement.

3.1.4 Stakeholder Engagement

The Task will engage with all stakeholders, including Work Package Leaders and their Task Leaders, project partners and participants, the European Commission, and other partners.

Ongoing engagement with stakeholders, through both established and new channels, will be essential to the achievement of objectives. The level of detail will also be modified in accordance with the reader, including work package leaders, task leaders, project partners, project participants, the EC and other partners.

3.2 Stakeholder Impact Analysis

Error! Reference source not found. lists the stakeholders of the GÉANT project and their interests with the aim to determine the impact they have on marketing communications. This integrated approach to understanding the stakeholders is useful to ensure effective communications.

Stakeholders	Interests	Estimated Impact	Estimated priority
WPLs /TLs	WPLs and TLs have a responsibility to disseminate their work and to engage with their audiences. The Task will work closely with them to ensure their communications needs are fully met and support the project's overall objectives.	Medium	2
Project Participants (partners)	The way in which this stakeholder consumes content is notable – as participants are often not involved in the project in a full-time capacity, and so the Task needs to compete for their attention and ensure the content is easy for them to consume.	Medium	2
EC	The EC requires the project to communicate its work and benefits to a wide range of audiences and needs to be kept up to date with developments and success stories. Therefore, the Task will work with the Project Officer to support their outreach efforts.	High	1
Other collaborators	The project needs to collaborate with a range of partners, and to support their outreach efforts, e.g. e-infrastructure partners and global partners. The Task will work with the relevant WPL/TL to ensure these collaborations continue to progress.	Medium	2

Table 3.1: Stakeholder impact analysis

3.2.1 Communications Plan

The communications plan details each objective, the actions to be taken to achieve it, the stakeholders targeted by the actions, the channels used to reach the stakeholders and how often the actions are to be executed.

Objective	Additional Information	Action	Target Stakeholders	Channels	Frequency
Position and promote the GÉANT network and services to European and global stakeholders.	GÉANT supports the EOSC and EDI initiatives and is engaging fully to examine the role that GÉANT and the NRENs can play. Once this role is understood and established, it will be integral to the project's overall positioning and messaging and the Task will work with the PMO and other stakeholders as needed to develop and disseminate this messaging through all relevant channels.	Develop and disseminate appropriate messaging regarding how GÉANT and the NRENs can best support the EOSC and EDI initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EC • NRENs • Partners • Public 	CONNECT feature articles and interviews with EC representatives. Published in print and online.	Quarterly
		Promote the GN4-3N infrastructure rollout with articles, blog posts, interviews with GN4-3N WPLs, graphics and animations.	• EC	CONNECT channels	Daily / Monthly
			• NRENs	Social media	As needed
			• Industry	Workshops	As needed
			• Public	Conferences	As needed
				Events	Quarterly
			External media (press)	Quarterly	
Create a dedicated website to illustrate the network (network.geant.org) to show GN4-3N progress, network rollout, traffic flows etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EC • NRENs • Industry • Institutions • End users • Public 	network.geant.org website	N/A		

Objective	Additional Information	Action	Target Stakeholders	Channels	Frequency
		Work with WP2 Task 2 to implement individual services marketing plans. Support Task 2 by editing and publishing articles, providing social media support, creating logos, animations and other design work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NRENS • Global partners • Institutions • End users 	CONNECT channels	Monthly
				Social media	Daily
				Workshops	As needed
				Conferences	As needed
				Events	As needed
				Service microsites (e.g. eduroam.org, eduGAIN.geant.org etc.)	Quarterly
Collaborate with other e-infrastructure providers, users, NRENS in Europe and worldwide, commercial partners and other stakeholders to maximise dissemination reach.	GÉANT has a comprehensive range of channels, however leveraging the reach of other stakeholders is important to maximise dissemination.	Contribute articles and success stories to the EC for publishing through their channels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EC • National governments • End users • Public 	EC channels	Quarterly
				Social media	Quarterly
		Contribute to In The Field Stories and promote this initiative throughout GÉANT channels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EC • National governments • End users • Public 	ITF website	Monthly
		Plan and execute social media campaigns in collaboration with NREN partners, e.g. love2eduroam.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NRENS • Institutions • End users 	Social media
		Invite contributed articles from NRENS and other partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EC • NRENS 	CONNECT channels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly (for online and newsletter)

Objective	Additional Information	Action	Target Stakeholders	Channels	Frequency
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industry • End users 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly (for magazine)
		Undertake joint press releases with suppliers where appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EC • National governments • Industry 	CONNECT channels	Quarterly
				Media (press)	Quarterly
				Events	Quarterly
Demonstrate the capabilities, value and impact of the GÉANT and R&E networks.	<p>The Task should do this through all relevant channels, but in particular utilising two websites to demonstrate the impact of the GÉANT and R&E networks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact.geant.org (GÉANT owned) highlights how the project enables large research projects, and supports research communities. • The In The Field Stories website, which can be contributed to by all NRENS. 	Create new user project case studies for the impact website (six in Year 1 (M1-12) and six in Year 2 (M13-23). It is anticipated that these additional projects/organisations highlight not just connectivity services, but specifically trust & identity services and cloud services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EC • NRENS • National governments • Research communities • End users • Public 	impact.geant.org	Quarterly
		Promote the featured projects and the site itself, create supporting materials (such as gifs, short video interviews with WP3 participants and project representatives) for use on social media channels, in collaboration with the featured projects/organisations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EC • NRENS • National governments • Research communities • End users • Public 	CONNECT magazine	Quarterly
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EC • NRENS • National governments • Research communities • End users • Public 	Community portal (connect.geant.org)	Monthly
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EC • NRENS • National governments • Research communities • End users • Public 	Weekly newsletter (PeaR – to become CONNECT newsletter)	Weekly
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EC • NRENS • National governments • End users 	Social media	Ad-hoc
Contribute to In The Field Stories and promote this initiative throughout GÉANT channels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EC • National governments • End users 	ITF website	Monthly		

Objective	Additional Information	Action	Target Stakeholders	Channels	Frequency
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public 		
		Provide full communications, branding and design support to WP2 Task 3 Events for external events at which the project has a presence: TNC, ICT, SuperComputing, EOSC Stakeholder Forum and others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EC • NRENS • National governments • Research communities • End users • Public • Global partners 	External events	As needed for event
		Create regular news, articles and blog posts about the GÉANT and R&E networks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EC • NRENS • National governments • Research communities • End users • Public 	CONNECT channels; GÉANT.org and social media channels	Ad-hoc

Objective	Additional Information	Action	Target Stakeholders	Channels	Frequency
Promote the GN4-3 and GN4-3N projects, and their activities, and foster inclusion amongst project participants.		Produce a two-page factsheet, new web pages and banners for the GÉANT website.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EC • NRENs • National governments • Research communities • End users • Public 	GÉANT website	M3
		Publish news items, articles and interviews to highlight the project's capabilities and value and promote through all channels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EC • NRENs • National governments • Research communities • End users • Public 	GÉANT channels; GÉANT website; EC and partner websites	Monthly
		Support project symposium and convention with messaging, promotion and workshops for WPLs and TLs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project participants 	PMC and Symposium; intranet, PMO weekly, banners	As needed for event
		Support the PMO with its weekly newsletter.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project participants 	PMO weekly	Weekly
		Produce branding guidelines and presentation templates for all partners and participants to use, to ensure consistent branding and practice by project participants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project participants • NRENs 	N/A	M3

Objective	Additional Information	Action	Target Stakeholders	Channels	Frequency
Streamline and improve effectiveness of communications channels	<p>The project’s communications channels have been developed in predecessor projects and include the main website (geant.org), a blog site (blog.geant.org) that includes NREN and partner news stories, a weekly newsletter (PeaR) that collates new content from blog.geant.org and distributes it via email to a list of subscribers, a website that highlights the project’s positive impact (impact.geant.org), the CONNECT printed magazine, several service websites (clouds.geant.org, eduGAIN.geant.org, eduroam.org, inacademia.org etc.), and a range of social media channels that continue to grow in reach and influence.</p> <p>In GN4-3 the Task will simplify the communications channels and improve their integration with one another, so that their impact is greater and</p>	Launch the CONNECT family of channels (magazine, website, newsletter).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EC • NRENs • National governments • Research communities • End users • Public 	CONNECT channels	M6
		Review and redesign the GÉANT.org website to be more engaging, with less content and fully integrated with other sites such as IMPACT, CONNECT etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EC • NRENs • National governments • Research communities • End users • Public 	GÉANT.org	M7 - M12
		Conduct a regular review process to ensure all GÉANT websites, social media channels and newsletters are aligned and working together to provide a seamless user experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EC • NRENs • National governments • Research communities • End users • Public 	All channels	Quarterly
		Provide design support to WP2 T2 to improve the branding of service microsities and ensure a more consistent feel that	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NRENs • Institutions • End users 	Services microsities	Quarterly

Objective	Additional Information	Action	Target Stakeholders	Channels	Frequency
	contributors are more comfortable with which channel to use.	emphasises where they sit under the GÉANT umbrella.			
Help to build a stronger profile for Trust & Identity – highlighting the range of services available and leveraging the brand awareness of core services such as eduroam and eduGAIN.	GÉANT holds a leadership position in Trust & Identity, with eduroam and eduGAIN acting as core services to the GÉANT offering, and new services such as eduTEAMS and InAcademia being added.	Support WP2 T2 Services Marketing by producing a range of materials (graphics, animations, literature, digital engagement campaigns, booth posters etc.), including short animations that encourage click through and a more in-depth video that targets a more technical audience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NRENS • Participants • Institutions • End users 	CONNECT channels	As needed for WP2 T2
				Social media channels	As needed for WP2 T2
				Impact website	As needed for WP2 T2
				Services microsites	As needed for WP2 T2
				Events	As needed for WP2 T2

Table 3.2: Communications plan

The identified actions will be tracked on an ongoing basis and their success measured against the KPIs set for the Task (see Section 4.). Progress will be reported in quarterly reports and any issues identified for monthly RAG reports.

4 Key Performance Indicators

The success of the Communications Plan is measured against Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

The following KPIs have been set to support the monitoring of this progress:

- Increase distribution of CONNECT printed magazine by 5% year on year.

In the final year of GN4-2, 1,850 printed copies of CONNECT magazine (covering issues 28, 29, and 30) were distributed. This figure includes those copies sent to NRENs and other organisations, and those distributed at events.

In GN4-3, distribution will be measured for each issue and reported within the quarterly reports, providing an overall annual figure. Distribution figures will include copies sent to NRENs and other organisations, and copies distributed at events.

- Increase total visits to GÉANT community portal (to be rebranded as connect.geant.org as part of the CONNECT family) by 10% year on year.

In the final year of GN4-2, the blog.geant.org website had 7,396 visitors (January 2018 – December 2018).

In GN4-3, visits will be measured on a monthly basis and reported in the quarterly reports, providing an overall annual figure for the calendar year.

- 50% of social media posts to generate $\geq 2.0\%$ engagement rate.

In the final year of GN4-2, the average engagement rate for GÉANT's Twitter posts was 0.8% for the period October 1 to December 31 2018 (most recent information available).

In GN4-3, digital engagement work will seek to improve this rate, which will be monitored on a monthly basis as part of a monthly digital engagement report, and also reported in the quarterly reports. Note the comparison data for the KPI will be based on Twitter posts, although other social media channels will be monitored as part of the reports.

5 Conclusions

The Task has a broad remit, and it is anticipated that the objectives and associated actions identified in this deliverable will bring clarity and purpose to this, thus providing the best possible support to the project's objectives.

Certain approaches are required to ensure success:

- Close collaboration with all Work Packages is a must, but particularly with WP3 *User & Stakeholder Engagement*, with Task 2 *Services Marketing* and with Task 3 *Events* within WP2 itself.
- Creation of engaging and appropriate content for diverse stakeholders, that can also be easily shared with and by project partners. The established 'twin track' approach that has proved effective in GN4-2 will continue to be followed, as will the approach of recognising the need for a diverse range of content to suit the digital landscape, and subsequent evolving behaviours of audiences.

Finally, in delivering the new CONNECT family (magazine, website and newsletter), it is hoped that the project's communications can take another step forward with a clearer mix of channels that offers project partners not only a strong platform for wider dissemination, but also a source of relevant community content that supports their own outreach activities. The impact.geant.org site is anticipated to grow substantially and help to reach non-technical audiences, and the creation of a raft of new content for these channels and social media is expected to grow the project's reach significantly.

Progress towards these objectives will be monitored on a monthly basis, reported on at the PMB meetings, and adjustments made where necessary to ensure completion.

Glossary

DI4R	Digital Infrastructures for Research
DoW	Description of Work
EC	European Commission
EOSC	European Open Science Cloud
EDI	European Data Infrastructure
EuroHPC	European High-Performance Computing
FPA	Framework Partnership Agreement
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
Horizon 2020	EU Research and Innovation programme
ICRI	International Conference on Research Infrastructures
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
M	Project month
NREN	National Research and Education Network
PMB	Project Management Board
PMO	Project Management Office
PR	Public Relations
T&I	Trust & Identity
TL	Task Leader
TNC	The Networking Conference
WP	Work Package
WPL	Work Package Leader