

## Note on E@P.Connect Project

E@P.Connect is an ambitious project that plans to connect electronically all Eastern Partnership countries' researchers and students to their western counterpart through the pan-European research and education network GÉANT. On 11th June, just after the meeting of the Digital Ministers with EAP countries, the contract for this project will be officially signed by DG NEAR Director Gerhard SCHUMANN-HITZLER and the President of the GÉANT association Pierre BRUYÈRE.

This project was developed by DG NEAR and DG CONNECT with region's research and education networks, governments as well Member States' research and education institutions and in conjunction with EAP Platform IV (Contact between People – DG EAC leading), EAP Panel on Research (DG RTD leading) and EEAS<sup>1</sup>.

The total project costs are estimated at €13.7 million (of which 95% is funded by DG NEAR).

The project is expected to start 1 June 2015 and last for 5 years and half. The first year will be dedicated to market survey, design and procurement while the remaining part of the project will focus on operation/upgrade and deployment of additional services in mobility and content access.

In practical terms, the project will:

- Design, procure and operate a concrete **regional optical infrastructure** connecting at multi gigabits/s speed the six countries to GÉANT
- Stimulate the adoption of the technology for **unifying the access to existing wifi infrastructures** and allowing smooth IT access in situation of mobility ("eduroam")
- **Make digital content available** to researchers through an harmonised identification access technique across the region (federation of identities and "eduGAIN")

A key critical success factor is the raise of the National Research and Education Networks' profile of the six beneficiary's countries - both financially and operationally – as a result of being part of GÉANT.

The project is expected to:

- Enable effective virtual collaboration with western counterparts to almost **2 million researchers** and high education students for **solving regional/global scientific challenges**
- **Removing technical barriers** for regional virtual collaboration including long communications delays, difficulties on IT registration, and difficulties in accessing content...
- By **proving world-class** tools it will help supporting the long-term goal of the countries to keep retain talents and possibly to repatriate diaspora
- Propose a path towards **integration** to Europe's flagship infrastructure, GÉANT
- **Stimulating national investments** for renovating campus IT and reinforcing national research and education networks
- It will help driving the **necessary renovation of the academic system** of the region and help driving talents in the system
- Ensure **coherent policy** articulation between ENPI and Horizon 2020
- Present a clear **sustainability path** and funding through the research's Framework Programme and co-funding

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<sup>1</sup> See Chisinau declaration: [https://www.terena.org/activities/development-support/epe2012/docs/joint\\_declaration.pdf](https://www.terena.org/activities/development-support/epe2012/docs/joint_declaration.pdf)