

Dear EGEE-II project members,

The end of year festive season is a good time to take stock of what has been a very dynamic and successful year for EGEE. Indeed, 2006 has been marked by many events and milestones. The first User Forum event at CERN in March, attended by over 240 people, provided an important opportunity for innovative applications to establish contacts with EGEE and with other user communities, to plan for future usage of the EGEE Grid infrastructure, to learn about the latest advances and to discuss the future evolution on the Grid middleware. Immediately after the user forum we had to prepare for the completion of the first phase of EGEE which was greeted with much acclaim from the independent reviewers appointed by the European Commission (EC). In parallel, a smooth transition to the second phase of the project was achieved with its new partners and new activities, despite the late signature of the contract with the EC. Several collaborating projects were successfully launched, thus widening the scope of EGEE in terms of geographical coverage and application communities supported. We now have more than 20 registered related projects and this number continues to grow. EGEE-II's programme of work started in earnest and members, related projects, approximately 20 leading companies and many other key Grid players came together at the EGEE'06 conference in September 2006, termed the "biggest Grid event" of the year in Europe.

The scale of the infrastructure managed by EGEE has doubled during the year. EGEE now counts over 200 sites and runs on average 30'000 jobs per day. There have been significant increases in the number of Virtual Organizations (now over 160) that make use of the resources it combines, proving the attractiveness of the infrastructure for user communities. On the middleware front, 2006 marked the fusion between the gLite and LCG distributions which required considerable effort behind the scenes to allow a smooth integration and subsequent deployment. All this has been possible because of a more concerted effort on the quality of the services offered by the project but this does not come for free and hence it has had an impact on the rate at which new developments can be integrated and deployed.

Not a day goes by without EGEE appearing in the news thanks to better audience targeting, more media relations and the introduction of a basic contact management system.

First-in-line for this media interest is the business world. The introduction of EGEE industry days (the first one was held in Paris in May and there have been five more in four countries since) is producing results as shown by the number of companies that are now keen to understand more about grids and talk to EGEE. The announcement of the EGEE Business Associate programme with Platform, NICE and PriceWaterhouseCoopers leading the way is also the product of this improved visibility.

Planning for the EC's 7th Framework Programme (FP7) is well underway with an outline of the work programme for the third phase of EGEE prepared by the PEB and presented at a joint PEB/PMB workshop on 14th December at CERN. The exact details of the relevant FP7 call are still to be published but our latest understanding is that the EGEE-3 proposal will need to be submitted in early September 2007.

Compared to EGEE-II, the total effort available to the project will be reduced due to FP7 changes and so we will be forced to make some hard choices about what we can afford to do with a limited budget.

EGEE-3 will be a stepping stone to what we hope will be a sustainable Grid infrastructure in the form of a pan-European Grid Initiative for which a preparatory project proposal is also in preparation and will be submitted in May.

The EGEE consortium will also be restructured for EGEE-3 with the decision of the PMB that academic or public research organisations in each country should be grouped with one contact point. The consortium has had considerable success with Joint Research Units (JRUs) in its current phase and these are the recommended means of establishing national associations. Such JRUs in each country can be seen as a step towards the creation of National Grid Initiatives (NGIs) and the devolution of responsibility for the national Grid infrastructures. This change has been enthusiastically embraced with more than 16 countries attending the JRU workshop in Brussels on the 1st December hosted by EGEE-II partner, VUB.

FP7 was high on the agenda for the IST event in Helsinki in November, where the plans for collaborating Grid Infrastructure projects and their future were discussed. These are paramount to EGEE's success and will be taken into consideration in the preparation of the EGEE-3 proposal.

In parallel, the first contract amendment for the EGEE-II project was signed in November, finalising the administrative formalities for the project. The next amendment will be submitted after the review which will be held on 15-16 May 2007 at CERN, the week following the User Forum, when reviewers will look in depth at the programme of work and the plans for the second year of the project. The External Advisory Committee for EGEE-II has been set up and will advise the project on its programme of work to better prepare for the review.

On this positive note, I thank you all for your productive and fruitful efforts this year in the project, and I wish you and your families all the very best for the festive season.

Yours sincerely,



Bob Jones
EGEE-II Project Director

Upcoming events:

Month	Event	URL
January	16-18, All Activity Meeting, Bologna, Italy	http://indico.cern.ch/conferenceDisplay.py?confId=8752
	24-26, Industry Day, Pisa, Italy	http://www.eu-egee.org/egee_events/industryday/
	29 Jan – 2 Feb, OGF, Chapel Hill, USA	http://www.ogf.org/OGF19/events_ogf19.php
February	23, Industry Day, Budapest, Hungary	http://www.eu-egee.org/egee_events/industryday/
	26-27, NGI Policy Workshop, Munich, Germany	http://www.eu-egi.org/workshop/
May	7-11, OGF/EGEE User Forum, Manchester, U.K.	Call for abstracts open: http://indico.cern.ch/conferenceCFA.py?confId=7247 Deadline 31 January
	15-16, EGEE-II Review, CERN, Geneva, Switzerland	Webpage will be created in January