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Milestone M3.3 (M49)
Stakeholder Engagement Plan Y2 Update

Abstract
This document provides an update to the GN4-3 Stakeholder Engagement Plan introduced in early 2020. It presents an overview of the adoption and implementation of the engagement plans, methodology and instruments to date, and of the adjustments carried out over the course of 2020.

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Executive Summary

This document provides an update to the GN4-3 Stakeholder Engagement Plan introduced in early 2020. It presents an overview of the adoption and implementation of the engagement plans, methodology and instruments to date, and of the adjustments carried out over the course of 2020.

GÉANT operates in a complex environment with a wide range of stakeholder groups. Each Work Package has its own subset of stakeholders and reasons for engaging with them. The Stakeholder Engagement Plan outlined in Deliverable D3.1 [D3.1] introduced a framework that is structured yet flexible, that gives autonomy to the Work Packages, but with comprehensive support and guidance provided by Work Package 3 User and Stakeholder Engagement, to ensure the needs of the stakeholders are met.

As a consequence of COVID-19, many of the stakeholder engagement activities planned for 2020 were cancelled, postponed or carried out virtually. At the same time, many *un*planned activities and events took place, to help stakeholders face the challenges presented by the pandemic. These were outlined in a new WP3 deliverable [D3.9], and included ad hoc requirements gathering calls, the launch of a community café, and enhanced and accelerated GÉANT service offerings in e-learning and videoconferencing.

The Stakeholder Engagement Plan introduced a set of quality control instruments to support its reporting, monitoring and evaluation, namely: enhanced GN4-3 event reporting; bi-annual reviews; the Project Management Board (PMB) as a discussion platform; a project customer relationship management (CRM) system; and a service uptake key performance indicator in WP3. Considerable progress has been made in the implementation of all of these, with flexibility and staged objectives adopted in response to complexities encountered, as, for example, in the definition of a new KPI and the introduction of a CRM.

Two further instruments were added to the framework: a dedicated WP3 Task 1 Liaison person for each Work Package, with an NREN Annual Engagement Plan template as a support tool, and an outreach checklist for new services.

The Stakeholder Engagement Plan has provided a framework that is robust, coordinated, allows engagement gaps across the project to be identified and acted upon, and that supports an agile approach. Its flexibility and resilience were demonstrated in the project's response to COVID-19.

Monitoring and fine-tuning are built into the framework, and will continue during 2021, together with efforts to increase an understanding of the framework across the project. Further updates will be provided in Milestones M3.5 (due in Month 36) and M3.7 (M48).

1   Introduction

This document provides an update to the GN4-3 Stakeholder Engagement Plan (D3.1) [D3.1] introduced in early 2020. The Plan provided, for the first time in a GN project, a structured approach to stakeholder engagement, both internal and external to the project. This framework for assessment and planning can be used by each Work Package irrespective of whether it has management, service or operational focus.

The premise is to allow each Work Package the necessary autonomy to define a plan that fits their needs, while offering guidance via the wider framework and additional assistance, as needed, via Work Package 3 User and Stakeholder Engagement (WP3). The framework and methodology adopted for the engagement plan set out to be proactive, comprehensive, agile and coordinated, thereby maximising the ability of GN4-3 to deliver benefit to and meet the needs of its stakeholders.

The objective of the initial plan outlined in D3.1 was to provide project participants with an overview of who the stakeholders are and how they are being engaged with. Such an overview enables effective oversight by WP3, and an efficient, coordinated approach to outreach.

This Year 2 update reviews the effectiveness of the new engagement management framework and proposes adjustments accordingly. It also considers how to leverage WP3 to enhance engagement and help drive the project.

Following a review of the adoption status of the engagement plans and methodology to date, including the main challenges and changes in the reporting period (Section 2), the document assesses the various instruments that have been introduced as part of the framework to improve reporting, monitoring and evaluation (Section 3). Further adjustments to the framework are detailed, which have been newly introduced over the course of the last year (Section 4), and the update concludes with an outlook for the next 12-month period (Section 5).

The document is the first annual update to the previously published D3.1. Further updates are scheduled as Milestones M3.5 (due in Month 36) and M3.7 (M48).

2 Adoption of Engagement Plans and Methodology to Date

The GN4-3 Stakeholder Engagement Plan defines, on a Work Package-specific level, the stakeholders, engagement channels, frequency of engagements as well as the purpose of engagement. This structured outline provided a solid framework for the specific activities planned for 2020 across the project.

The main factor impacting stakeholder engagement activities in 2020 was COVID-19 and its consequences on everyday life. Facing a global pandemic shifted many priorities for individuals and organisations alike.

The most notable change was a significant reduction in engagement activities in Q2 of 2020, a period when most of Europe went into national lockdowns and the main focus was on ensuring business continuity. Planned activities during this time were mostly cancelled, postponed until next year or rescheduled for a later date. Over the months, general engagement activities resumed virtually wherever it was feasible to do so; for example, all Task Forces and Special Interest Groups moved to virtual meetings, whereas TNC20 was rescheduled to 2021.

To illustrate the impact of COVID-19 on the research and education (R&E) community, WP3 prepared a new deliverable, D3.9 *GÉANT Support for R&E during the Early Stages of the COVID-19 Pandemic* [D3.9]. The deliverable outlines the actions and strategic measures that have been put in place by the R&E community, National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) and GÉANT to support their respective stakeholders in this new situation and to support science and the public sector alike with the fight against COVID-19. Amongst other measures, GÉANT enhanced its service offering in e-learning and videoconferencing tools to meet the needs of the R&E community.

The entire community successfully moved to a fully virtual way of knowledge exchange and collaboration. However, the informal element of face-to-face meetings has not been possible over the last year. Engagement channels with NRENs were less impacted due to longstanding, close, collaborative relationships between the NRENs and GÉANT. Also, a Community Café, run by WP3 and launched during the first phase of lockdown, provided the opportunity to meet for an informal exchange [Community Café]. However, engagement with researchers, international science groups or new stakeholders (e.g. EuroHPC) proved to be more challenging and has largely been postponed to 2021.

3 Instruments to Improve Reporting, Monitoring and Evaluation

The GN4-3 Stakeholder Engagement Plan introduced a set of quality control instruments to support its reporting, monitoring and evaluation. The instruments are:

1. Enhanced GN4-3 event reporting.
2. Bi-annual reviews.
3. Project Management Board (PMB) as discussion platform.
4. Project customer relationship management (CRM) system.
5. Service uptake key performance indicator (KPI) in WP3.

The following sections review the implementation status of each of these instruments to date.

3.1 Enhanced GN4-3 Event Reporting

Within GN4-3, it is mandatory for each Work Package to complete the Event Reporting Template at the end of each quarterly reporting period. To enhance the reporting of outreach activities, an additional column is planned to be added, indicating the stakeholder engagement purpose of each event or activity.

An updated template is currently being prepared.

3.2 Bi-annual Reviews

To ensure timely support for each Work Package, bi-annual meetings are being introduced between WP3 Task 1 Partner Relations and Engagement (on behalf of WP3) and the other WPs to review the status of their engagement plan, address any challenges and provide support as needed. These reviews support the alignment of the outreach activities across the project by identifying any possible gaps or overlaps. For efficiency, and to minimise the overhead for everyone involved, the Project Annual Internal Review (PAIR) meetings will form one of the bi-annual reviews per year.

Since the introduction of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan, one bi-annual review as part of the PAIR meetings carried out in summer 2020 has been completed. Whilst it was initially planned for a WP3 T1 representative to join the PAIR meetings, the Project Management Office (PMO) advised against that given the extraordinary times in the current year and the respective resource constraints. The

review of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan was kept on the agenda of the PAIR meetings but was carried out by the PMO themselves.

To support the review, a standardised questionnaire was sent to each Work Package Leader (WPL) prior to the PAIR meetings. The questionnaire has been added as Appendix A.

Most Service Work Packages (WP4, WP6, WP7, WP8 and WP9) provided feedback by completing the questionnaire. WP4 and WP6 further updated their Stakeholder Engagement Plans for the coming year.

A follow-up meeting between the PMO, WP3 WPL and T1 concluded that at this point in time it is too early for a lightweight approach and additional guidance by WP3 is required to support a structured review of the engagement plans. The PMO and WP3 agreed:

- To continue to keep the bi-annual reviews as part of the PAIR meetings since stakeholder engagement is a key element of successful operation and delivery across all Work Packages.
- A representative of WP3 T1 will join the PAIR meetings during an allocated agenda slot to guide the WPLs through the engagement review and follow-on actions.

3.3   PMB as Discussion Platform

The regular monthly meetings of the Project Management Board (PMB) are an established platform for the project to exchange knowledge and ideas, pose questions and synchronise planned activities.

These meetings continue to be a valuable source to achieve this without adding additional overhead caused by separate meetings.

3.4   Project CRM

In summer 2020, the GÉANT Association initiated a formal project to deploy and implement a customer relationship management (CRM) system. Extensive requirements gathering meetings were held with GÉANT senior management and team leads to assess the needs across all business and service areas. Further in-depth meetings were held with Work Package Leaders, Task Leaders and representatives from WP1, WP3, WP5, WP6, WP7, WP9 and GN4-3N.

The focus of these meetings was capturing service adoption and requirements, alignment of work processes and automation tools and, ultimately, the requirements for a project-wide CRM. It was identified that the requirements and accompanying changes in operational processes for each service area would be too complex to realise at this stage. Equally, the question of budget for a project CRM remains unsolved due to lack of a dedicated CRM budget in GN4-3.

Based on the findings it was agreed that, in the first instance, the objective is to successfully roll out and maintain a CRM across the Community Relations Office, which consists of the different stakeholder engagement teams within the GÉANT Association as key stakeholders for such a system. These teams are represented in GN4-3 by WP3 T1, T2, T3, T4 and WP1 T6 respectively. The project is led by the Partner Relations Team and the budget is provided by the GÉANT Association.

It was agreed that a "start simple and build on it gradually" approach is expected to be most successful. The focus is on successfully establishing a CRM across all GÉANT internal stakeholder functions first, with the option to gradually add in more users.

The planned schedule for the CRM project is as per D3.1, with development in Y2 and implementation in Y3. The request for quotation (RFQ) and further procurement processes are planned to be in place by the end of 2020 and it is planned to deploy the system in late spring 2021.

3.5 Service Uptake KPI in WP3

WP3 measures the success of the engagement activities via a set of key performance indicators (KPIs) that were defined at the beginning of the project:

- NRENs' level of satisfaction with the Partner Relations support maintained (measured through the annual Satisfaction Survey).
- At least 20 NREN service review meetings per year.
- Increase of 5% year-on-year of tracked usage statistics and downloads of the Compendium website and deliverables.
- Attendance at 25 or more user-specific events per year (GEO, LHC, etc.).
- 10 news stories resulting from Task Force (TF) and Special Interest Group (SIG) activities per year.

With the implementation of the GN4-3 Stakeholder Engagement Plan it is proposed to consider the introduction of the additional KPI "increase of service uptake or number of piloting partners", including an information breakdown of service feedback and service engagement per NREN/user group.

Not all services are available to all GÉANT NRENs and with the ongoing extension of the GÉANT Service Portfolio, particularly the addition of end-user-based services, measuring the service adoption is not straightforward for all services and for some services (e.g. WiFiMon) not even possible. Therefore, a suitable reference point has to be defined for each service. Further work is needed by the Product Lifecycle Management (PLM) Team and Service Owners to define suitable metrics for each service before a general KPI can be introduced.

4   Further Adjustments to the Framework

Throughout the course of the year, the Partner Relations Team further professionalised the collaboration with the other Work Packages to respond to the ever-increasing complexity of the project, keeping up with ongoing outreach activities across the different Work Packages and easing communication flow between WP3 and the rest of the project.

Two additional instruments were implemented:

- Dedicated WP3 T1 Liaison Contact for each Work Package.
- Outreach checklist for new services.

Each of these is described below.

4.1   Dedicated WP3 T1 Liaison Contact for each WP

In Q3 2020 a dedicated WP3 T1 Liaison person was appointed and introduced for each WP in the project. Each Liaison person is also an NREN Relationship Manager and has an in-depth understanding of NREN interests, preferred ways of interacting and specific challenges, and is ideally placed to work on determining the most appropriate engagement channels.

The objective of this additional measure is to reduce complexity whilst providing tailored support. The sought benefits of such an approach are:

- Dedicated contact person for each Work Package.
- Assigned contact person can develop a deeper understanding of the activities, plans and interests of the respective WP.
- Secure continuous information flow between WP3 and the WP.

The respective WP3 T1 team member agrees with the WPL the most suitable way to work together and stay in touch. Most commonly this can be regular meetings with the WPL, joining WP team calls and/or working on specific items such as support for the roll-out of new services.

A collaboration plan is being defined, which is due to be completed by the end of 2020 and then updated annually as needed. This plan acts as a WP3 internal instrument to support the definition of the collaboration objectives between WP3 and the other WP and outline planned collaboration activities. The structure mirrors the NREN Annual Engagement Plan. The template is added as Appendix B.

4.2   Outreach Checklist for New Services

To support service teams early on in the service lifecycle to consider the different aspects of outreach activities, a standardised outreach checklist is being trialled. Before a service enters the production gate, a preliminary meeting between WP3 T1, Product Management and Marketing and the Service Team is set up to review and assess:

- The existing status of NREN engagement and NREN awareness level.
- Supporting material in place for WP3.
- The support needs through WP3 for the new service.

In its core points it reflects the approach outlined in D3.1 Section 5. The checklist is added as Appendix C.

At the time of writing, this approach has been trialled with WiFiMon and eduMEET after their production gate reviews. Whilst such assessment was of great benefit in general, going forward it is recommended to carry it out before the production gate review.

5 Conclusions and Next Steps

GÉANT operates in a complex environment with a wide range of stakeholder groups. Each Work Package has its own subset of stakeholders and reasons for engaging with them.

With the introduction of the GN4-3 Stakeholder Engagement Plan outlined in D3.1, a framework is in place that allows engagement gaps across the project to be identified and acted upon; that supports an agile approach, recognising that continuous adjustments are required to meet changing demands over the lifetime of the project; and that makes provision for Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, and Informed (RACI) assessments of one-off engagements to be decided on a case-by-case basis.

Whilst COVID-19 posed an extraordinary challenge for all Work Packages in Y2, the underlying framework demonstrated its strength, allowing the project to navigate the situation, refocusing priorities and identifying suitable alternatives for engagement.

The instruments introduced in D3.1 have not been fully rolled out yet. Experiences so far are promising but require further working practice or investigation, as in the case of the new KPI. Some adjustments have already been identified to better fit into the project's work and communication flow. Also, two new instruments have been added to further support collaboration between WP3 and the other Work Packages.

Finally, an increased understanding of the framework is required for it to be implemented successfully. The newly introduced dedicated WP3 T1 Liaison person will not only support the respective Work Packages to achieve their engagement objectives but also act as an ambassador for the framework itself.

Over the next reporting period, the objective is to fully roll out all introduced instruments and incorporate the framework into the regular working procedures of the project.

Appendix A PAIR Meeting – Stakeholder Engagement Questionnaire

Purpose

Review the status of the planned stakeholder engagement activities as defined in D3.1 and what changes might be considered for the next period. Aid planning the WP3 support activities for the respective WP.

Reference D3.1

https://intranet.geant.org/gn4/3/Work-Packages/WP3/_layouts/15/WopiFrame.aspx?sourcedoc=/gn4/3/Work-Packages/WP3/Deliverables%20Documents/Stakeholder%20Engagement%20Activity%20and%20Plan/D3-1_Stakeholder-Engagement-Activity-and-Plan.docx&action=default

Questions

1. Reviewing your outlined stakeholder engagement plan for 2020, what went well / what caused challenges?
2. Were there any adjustments/changes to the plan, and what were the reasons for that?
3. Which channel do you consider most successful and why?
4. Have you identified any engagement gaps?
5. What, if any, have been the lessons learned?
6. Does your WP plan to run a survey in the next 12 months?
7. Is there anything that WP3 (Partner Relations, Research Engagement, Insights, Community Programme) can provide support for?

Appendix B Work Package Collaboration Plan

WP	Thematic Areas	WP3 T1 Owner	Where are we now?	Where do we want to be?	Tactics – how do we get there?	Specific projects or work	Measurement – how do we know we got there?
WP1	Project Office, Finance and Governance, EC Liaison PLM, Training (WP1)						
WP2	Communications (WP2)						
WP3	User Engagement (WP3 T2)						
WP4	Clouds and VideoConf (WP4)						
WP5	T&I (WP5)						
WP6	Future Network Services (WP6)						

WP	Thematic Areas	WP3 T1 Owner	Where are we now?	Where do we want to be?	Tactics – how do we get there?	Specific projects or work	Measurement – how do we know we got there?
WP7 & 9	Network Services and Operations (WP7, WP9 excl. Software/IT)						
WP7	GN4-3N						
WP8	Security (WP8)						

Appendix C NREN Engagement and Outreach Plan and Checklist for New Services

To be completed ahead of the Production Gate Review of a new service by Partner Relations together with Product Management, Service Marketing and the Service Owner.

Service:
Service Owner:
Product Manager:
Partner Relations Contact:

1. Short summary of the service:

2. Does the service have any adoption KPIs that need to be met?

3. Have any outreach or co-creation activities been carried out during the development phase?

4. Is the NREN the target of the service?

If yes to 4, then complete questions 5 – 8. Otherwise continue with question 9.

5. Have any NRENs already expressed interest or are early adopters?

6. What is the service adoption process? How can NRENs request a service? Do we track service uptake via the Partner Portal?

   • Can Non-EU NRENs/users adopt the service?

   • Is the process different to that for EU NRENs, as described in the first part of this question?

7. Is the Partner Portal information (and Service Request Form, if needed) prepared and approved?

8. What NREN outreach activities are planned?

9. Is a Partner Relations Service Pack in place?

10. Through which channels will the service be promoted to the general public? (WP2)

11. Short summary of Engagement Plan and expected outcomes:

12. Date to review the above and discuss additional measures/changes:

References

[Community_Café]	https://connect.geant.org/2020/04/15/welcome-to-the-geant-community-cafe
[D3.1]	https://www.geant.org/Projects/GEANT_Project_GN4-3/GN43_deliverables/D3-1_Stakeholder-Engagement-Activity-and-Plan.pdf
[D3.9]	https://www.geant.org/Projects/GEANT_Project_GN4-3/GN43_deliverables/D3-9_GEANT-Support-for-RandE-during-the-Early-Stages-of-the-COVID-19-Pandemic_Version-1-2.pdf

Glossary

CRM	Customer Relationship Management
GEO	Group on Earth Observations
GN4-3	GÉANT Network 4 Phase 3, a project part-funded by the EC's Horizon 2020 programme under the Specific Grant Agreement No. 856726
GN4-3N	GÉANT Network 4 Phase 3 Network, a project part-funded by the EC's Horizon 2020 programme under the Specific Grant Agreement No. 856728
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LHC	Large Hadron Collider
M	Milestone
M	Project Month
NREN	National Research and Education Network
PAIR	Project Annual Internal Review
PLM	Product Lifecycle Management
PMB	Project Management Board
PMO	Project Management Office
Q	Project Quarter
R&E	Research and Education
RACI	Responsible, Accountable, Consulted and Informed
RFQ	Request for Quotation
SIG	Special Interest Group
T	Task
TF	Task Force
TL	Task Leader
WP	Work Package
WP1	Work Package 1 Project Management
WP2	Work Package 2 Marketing, Communications and Events
WP3	Work Package 3 User and Stakeholder Engagement
WP3 T1	WP3 Task 1 Partner Relations and Engagement
WP1 T6	WP1 Task 6 Global Partnerships
WP3 T2	WP3 Task 2 Research Engagement
WP3 T3	WP3 Task 3 Stakeholder Insight
WP3 T4	WP3 Task 4 Community Programme
WP4	Work Package 4 Online Services Development and Delivery
WP5	Work Package 5 Trust and Identity
WP6	Work Package 6 Network Technologies and Services Development
WP7	Work Package 7 Network Core Infrastructure and Core Service Evolution and Operations
WP8	Work Package 8 Security

WP9	Work Package 9 Operations Support
WPL	Work Package Leader
Y	Project Year