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xGUS - a helpdesk template

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Overview

The Global Grid User Support portal (GGUS) is the central helpdesk system for EGI. It is currently interfaced with 16 regional or national helpdesk systems.

The xGUS helpdesk template, originally developed for the use by NGIs, could also be of interest for user communities wanting to structure their user support and integrate it with the EGI support.

xGUS contains all basic helpdesk functionalities including user administration and certificate access. xGUS is hosted and maintained at the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) in Germany. Portal administrators from the client user community can customize the portal to their specific needs. Via web, they can edit, add and delete the support units, variables which are used for the classification of tickets like 'Type of problem', 'VO'etc. and the hyperlinks to related web pages displayed on the portal.

Impact

With the xGUS framework user communities have easy access to their own, independent helpdesk system with many helpful features. They can benefit of the experience gained over several years in the GGUS team instead of starting from scratch with a new helpdesk system. Their User Support can be integrated into the existing and well-established structure with GGUS at the center. All problems described in the tickets are stored in databases as well as the steps that have been done to obtain a solution. Each helpdesk system becomes a problem database which can help to solve similar or related problems.

The helpdesk system gives project leaders and users the possibility to gain an overview over upcoming problems and to find out where improvements could be necessary.

Description of the work

The xGUS portal is a template framework for a helpdesk system.

The portal brings a lot of features which are suitable to provide effective user support. Users can enter the portal with their grid certificate, or via login and password. They can submit a ticket via a form and classify their problem. First Level Support assigns the ticket to the appropriate support unit. The responsible support unit gets informed via email about open tickets. Users or support staff can use the portal or an email interface to add comments to the ticket. When replying to an email received from the helpdesk, the answer text is added to the ticket history.

Support staff can create relations between different tickets. If several tickets depend on the solution of another one, they can be marked as slaves. When the master ticket is solved, the solution is transferred to the slaves and they are solved automatically. If one ticket depends on the solution of several other tickets, these tickets are marked as children of this ticket. Only when all of the child tickets are solved, the parent ticket can be solved, too.

With the news module, which is included in the portal, events and news can be announced easily via the

portal. An RSS feed can be subscribed to stay up to date about news.

Registered users can view tickets of their personal interest on their dashboard.

Subscription to a ticket triggers email notifications about ticket updates for interested users who are not the submitter.

Tickets which cannot be solved within the helpdesk instance, can be duplicated to GGUS. All changes which are made in the GGUS system are also synchronized to the original ticket.

Running on the same system, adjustments concerning the interface between GGUS and xGUS can be made quickly and efficiently. Clients are not obliged to care about technical details of their helpdesk system. All server related issues are handled at the KIT, as well as the operation and maintenance of the helpdesk portal itself.

URL

https://ggus.eu

Conclusions

With xGUS, the GGUS team offers a comfortable way for user communities, who need a user support infrastructure, to obtain an independent helpdesk portal which provides all necessary functionality to track and classify problems. It enables a quick and easy communication between the user and the support staff. Helpdesk administrators can customize the helpdesk to the specific needs of the community. They can set links on the portal which are helpful for users like domumentations or other relevant web pages.

The use of xGUS guarantees a consistent user support infrastructure troughout the whole EGI project.

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