

Opening EGI Conference 2020 – Arjen van Rijn

I want to welcome you all warmly to this 2020 EGI Conference! As with almost all events this year it is going to be an online meeting, but the program is as interesting as ever. Let's be optimistic: there will come times again, that we can meet each other in person.

The previous EGI conference was hosted in Amsterdam in May 2019, the first one that I had the honor to open as your chair person. That conference celebrated 15 years of grid operations. Today there is another celebration: 50 years of Tiziana! Congratulations, Tiziana, and a big virtual round of applause for you!

Many things have happened in the last 1,5 year. Let me start by stating that the EGI Federation is doing great. Of course I am biased, but let me explain why I believe this.

First of all the Federation is growing. We will welcome new participants. Four of these are research infrastructures: SeaDataNet, IS-ENES, EMSO and EISCAT. So, CERN will not be alone anymore as a Research Infrastructure in the EGI Council. And what also makes me very happy is that Germany via the Gauss Allianz will return as full participant of EGI.

The second sign of why I think the EGI Federation is doing great, is our success in many European projects. The EGI Foundation -in cooperation with its Federation partners- will grow to almost 40 people next year to carry out all project tasks.

The third sign is, that I perceive an enormous interest in Europe in the concept of federation as the basis for the European Open Science Cloud. I know of no other organization that has mastered the game of federating resources so successfully as EGI.

Does this mean we can relax and enjoy? No, not at all. I see two major interrelated uncertainties for EGI.

The first is that we still do not know what the scope of EOSC will be. Will it be just implementing a web of fair data with a focus on data standards? Or will it be an all-encompassing environment where data, computations and services will float freely across borders? This discussion on scope will heavily influence the strategy for EGI. The EGI Council will have a first discussion on this later this week, based on an excellent analysis performed by the Taskforce on Governance and Business Models.

The second uncertainty is the positioning of EGI within the total context of e-infrastructure services. In the provisioning landscape we see blurring borders: HTC, HPC, data handling, processing and analysis, above the net services, with as yet to be sorted out roles for publicly funded e-infrastructures and industrial cloud federation initiatives, such as GAIA-X.

To address these uncertainties I believe it is very important, that the national building blocks of the EGI federation, the NGIs, are extremely well connected to and embedded in their national e-infrastructure contexts. This is where I expect this integration of interests will take place and can then be further worked out on the European level, including EGI as we know it now.

When I started as your EGI chair person I have expressed my thoughts in this direction. In practice this has not been easy to do: there is still a lot of work to be done!