

Nordic Position on GÉANT Software Greenhouse

The proposed GÉANT Software Greenhouse has been discussed for some time. The present note offers the position of the Nordic NRENs and NORDUnet on the proposal.

Software Greenhouse

We understand the software greenhouse as essentially an administrative function, offered as a service for community projects. We see the software greenhouse as fairly simple, with a lifespan (if successful) beyond GN4. We understand the software greenhouse as not engaged with the subject matter of the open source software projects. We also understand the software greenhouse administration of a project as in no way expressing endorsement or commitment of any sort by the GÉANT Association or its members.

We understand the GÉANT Software Greenhouse as a way for the European R&E network community to support open source initiatives, undertaken and financed by the community for its own purposes.

We understand the software greenhouse as a way for the community – using the GÉANT Association as an instrument - to help solve challenges faced by many community open source projects: consortia administration, collecting financial contributions, paying developers, providing financial reports, etc. In this model, the greenhouse does not incur responsibility for 1) software development, 2) consortia setup and agreements, 3) consortia governance, and 4) decisions on how funds are spent or on development roadmaps and priorities.

Position on Software Greenhouse

The Nordic NRENs and NORDUnet fully support the creation of a software greenhouse function hosted by the GÉANT Association. We believe that the software greenhouse falls fully under the community support role that traditionally was a core mission of TERENA. We see a need for the service among GÉANT Association members. We have identified open source projects in the Nordic community that could benefit from such a function.

We support the GÉANT software greenhouse as a permanent function of the GÉANT Association funded on a cost-recovery basis by those who use it. We believe the GÉANT Software Greenhouse can be achieved independently of the GN4 or other projects. In fact, we believe the activity will be delayed and will not benefit from being incorporated into GN4 or other projects.

We see the GÉANT support for a software greenhouse as similar to the GÉANT support for Task Forces, Special Interest Groups, and Workshops. We believe that the GÉANT PDOs are well equipped for the community engagement and support required, with appropriate administrative and financial reporting assistance present in the GÉANT Association.

We believe the GÉANT Software Greenhouse fits into what used to be the GÉANT Community program (former TERENA Technical Program). We encourage the GÉANT Association to urgently move ahead and establish a simple Software Greenhouse function and not let community open source initiatives wait further.

Recommended Actions

To implement the GÉANT Software Greenhouse, we believe the GÉANT Association must:

- Announce a decision to create the GÉANT Software Greenhouse.
- Initiate a pilot activity, with two or three community open source projects supported. This will allow both GÉANT and the community to learn and to develop the concept through an iterative process.
- Define clear and simple success criteria to measure the success or failure of the pilot.
- Set a deadline (we propose Q1 2016) for the pilot to be operational.
- Urgently select community open source efforts that will be part of a pilot and announce those. The projects in the pilot must be willing to assist in creating lessons learned documentation.
- Set a deadline for transition out of the pilot (we propose Q1 2017).

In order for this to happen, the GÉANT Association should:

- Assign a project development officer for the pilot.
- Clarify the legal implications and financial reporting requirement; it must be clear that there is no financial liability for the GÉANT Association from the open source projects hosted by the greenhouse.
- Produce terms of reference and a simple governance structure for the software greenhouse function, i.e. it must be clear who can use the service and how a project is accepted into the service.
- Clarify the exact functions undertaken and offered by the software greenhouse, i.e. financial bookkeeping, annual financial reports, collecting contributions, etc..
- Produce a draft agreement between GÉANT Association and community open source projects.
- Clarify the cost to a community open source project for using the software greenhouse.
- Agree pilots with a limited number of projects and announce those.