



## Press Release

# Morocco and Tunisia Connected to First Mediterranean R&E network

**EUMEDCONNECT project adds a further two new links to the first telecommunications network for research and education in the Mediterranean region**

**Cambridge, UK, 3 June 2004** – DANTE “Delivery of Advanced Network Technology to Europe” is pleased to announce two further new circuits in the EUMEDCONNECT network. The two circuits will run from Rabat, Morocco and Tunis, Tunisia, to Catania, Italy at 34 Mbps and 45 Mbps speeds respectively.

The new circuits will connect the countries’ National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) - Centre National pour la Recherche Scientifique et Technique (CNRST) for Morocco and Réseau Fédéré de la Recherche (RFR), managed by the Secretary of State for Scientific Research and Technology, for Tunisia - to the EUMEDCONNECT Mediterranean network and to the multi-gigabit GÉANT pan-European research and education network. For the first time, researchers in Morocco and Tunisia will have dedicated connectivity to research centres and institutions in other Mediterranean countries, across Europe, and around the world.

The contracts for the links from Morocco and Tunisia to Italy were awarded to TI Sparkle following a public tender. The new circuits bring to 7 the number of Mediterranean Partners now connected: Algeria’s 45 Mbps connection was announced last month and Cyprus, Israel, Malta and Turkey are already connected via GÉANT.

- MORE -

The two new circuits land in Catania, where a EUMEDCONNECT PoP (point of presence) has been established, to serve as a hub for traffic on the emerging EUMEDCONNECT regional network. TI Sparkle is also providing EUMEDCONNECT with additional capacity to carry traffic between Catania and the GÉANT PoP in Milan.

The EUMEDCONNECT project is funded by the European Commission within the framework of the MEDA Regional Programme. It is establishing an IP-based network serving the research and education communities of the Mediterranean region and linking to the pan-European GÉANT network. The EUMEDCONNECT network will transform the scale and reach of Mediterranean research and education networking.

The network represents a major step towards overcoming the region's digital divide, enabling Mediterranean researchers to participate in European research projects, and in international collaborations thanks to GÉANT's connections to research and education networks around the world. The initiative will also act as a catalyst for the further development of the in-country research and education networks, and encourage the development of the Internet in the Mediterranean.

"The EUMEDCONNECT network provides the opportunity for researchers in Morocco to participate much more actively with their counterparts in the Mediterranean, and around Europe", said Mr Redouane Merrouch of CNRST. "This achievement is going to really make a difference for us."

Mme Malika Zenati of RFR also warmly welcomed the new circuits, adding, "The EUMEDCONNECT initiative is providing a real boost to Tunisia's research and education sector. Providing researchers with state-of-the-art facilities helps to level the playing field for them with respect to the global research race."

Enzo Valente, General Manager of GARR, the Italian NREN, said, "The EUMEDCONNECT network is now becoming established, and the Catania hub provides a key interconnection point between the EUMEDCONNECT and GÉANT networks. I hope that in the future this will become an important gateway for high volumes of traffic to flow between Europe and the Mediterranean as researchers in both regions collaborate in their work."

**- RELEASE ENDS -**

### **About EUMEDCONNECT**

EUMEDCONNECT is providing dedicated Internet connections between the research and educational communities of the Mediterranean region and will link them to Europe by connecting to GÉANT, the pan-European research and education network. The project is being funded until June 2006 with 10 M Euros from the European Commission's EUMEDIS programme, which aims to promote the Information Society in the region. The project is co-ordinated by DANTE. Its Mediterranean partners are the National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) of the following countries and territories: Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey. Its European partners are GRNET, GARR, RedIRIS and RENATER, the NRENs in Greece, Italy, Spain and France respectively. Following a tender issued in February 2003, contracts are being awarded for the EUMEDCONNECT Internet connections for service starting during 2004.

**- MORE "ABOUT" -**

**About DANTE:**

DANTE's name derives from the acronym 'Delivery of Advanced Network Technology to Europe'. Owned by European NRENs (National Research and Education Networks), it is an organisation whose purpose is to plan, build and operate pan-European networks for research and education. Working in partnership with Europe's NRENs and in cooperation with the European Commission, DANTE has been fundamental to the success of European research and education networking over the last decade, providing the data communications infrastructure essential to the success of many research projects in Europe today.

**About GÉANT:**

Reaching over 3,500 research and education institutions in 32 European countries through its direct connection to 28 National and Regional Research and Education Networks (NRENs), and also offering high-speed international connectivity to other world regions, GÉANT provides the highest capacity and offers the greatest geographic coverage of any network of its kind in the world. Enabling researchers to compete on an international stage by providing them with a world-class backbone that offers the bandwidth and services required for research activities at this level, GÉANT has dual roles of providing an infrastructure to support research and education, as well as providing an infrastructure for research itself.

GÉANT is a project co-funded by the European Commission under the Fifth Research & Development Framework Programme. The project partners are 26 European NRENs, together with DANTE as the co-ordinating partner.

Detailed information about EUMEDCONNECT can be found at <http://www.dante.net/server/show/nav.008>.

For further information, please contact:

**Dale Robertson**

**Tel: +44 1223 302 992**

**Fax: +44 1223 303 005**

**E-mail: [dale.robertson@dante.org.uk](mailto:dale.robertson@dante.org.uk)**

**- END -**