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EOSC EU node - data centric cloud services

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For those who track the development of EOSC, you'll remember the first five years of "building EOSC" were devoted to building the initial federation of existing research data infrastructures in Europe and design and implement the first EOSC Core service needed to build a web of FAIR data. All of this activity was conducted through grants calls; e.g., for the abovementioned EOSC Core service, the EOSC-Future project conducted a lot of development activities. At some point during this process, thinking inside the EC evolved to the point where they decided to depart from the hitherto used scheme of using grant calls to build EOSC. It seems a desire had grown to test the market for its ability to provide parts of the services needed to construct EOSC, and in May 2022 they did indeed publish a "prior information notice" stating the EC was about to go to tender for three lots to build an actual, functional pilot node for the imagined EOSC.

When that notice to tender (the "PIN") was published, many NRENs and similar entities realised they either were unable to bid (e.g., for incorporation or mandate reasons), or were not comfortable bidding (e.g., conservative legal advice, failure to secure board approval) or did not have the personnel on-board that could manage a bid procedure.

As a result, there was at the time considerable fear that external, commercial operators might swoop in and disrupt the ecosystem of not-for-profit R&E operators, with all kinds of fallout; fragmentation of the provider landscape, loss of training, loss of intra-R&E cohesion, loss of operator-customer relationships, disinvestment, etc.

The resulting tender procedure lasted for over a year and had a few bends and twists. Fortunately, at the time of writing this submission, we can fast-forward to a good outcome for the community. A group of NREN operators, rounded out through the participation of two friendly commercial operators, has managed to win the two user-facing lots (#2 and #3) of this procurement, at a total contract value of ~€15M for three years.

This gives the R&E community a seat at the table with the EC; this is a splendid chance to continue to influence the direction of EOSC; it also gives us a wonderful chance to continue to develop our own service portfolio in direct contact with a pan-European user base.

This presentation will cover the makeup of the bid team, the specs tendered for, the process of responding to the tender and the challenges in doing so, and the infrastructure built by the time TNC24 comes around; we will also touch upon future architectural plans and opportunities for the R&E community.

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