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The EGEE user support infrastructure

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Grid user support is a challenging task due to the distributed nature of the grid. The variety of users and Virtual Organisations adds further to the challenge. Support requests come from grid beginners, from users with specific applications, from site administrators, or from grid monitoring operators. With the GGUS infrastructure, EGEE provides a portal where users can find support in their daily use of the grid. The current use of the system shows that the goal has been achieved with success.

The grid user support model in EGEE can be captioned “regional support with central coordination”. This model is realised through a support process which is clearly defined and involves all the parties that are needed to run a project-wide support service. This process is sustained by a help desk system which consists of a central platform integrated with several satellite systems belonging to the Regional Operations Centres (ROCs) and the Virtual Organisations (VOs). The central system (Global Grid User Support, GGUS) interconnects the ROCs and VOs and the other project wide groups like middleware, network, and service groups. Additionally the central system acts as a portal for users, offering the possibility to document problems and requests in the form of trouble tickets. Since all trouble tickets pass through the GGUS system it is the perfect place to store information on problems and of course also their solution in a knowledge base, available to users and support staff.

A well established and functional user support service permeates the whole EGEE project and it is one of the core non-middleware services and as such one of the key success factors in running a production quality infrastructure. Over the course of the series of EGEE projects the GGUS system and the management of the support process has been professionalised by applying proper change and process management strategies. The GGUS system is being improved through a series of regular new releases, which are well planned and documented including release notes. A coordinating body involving all relevant parties meets regularly to plan the future strategy. Applying these processes, the GGUS system has been constantly improved and its acceptance throughout the project has constantly increased. With this presentation of the GGUS system, we aim at a better understanding of the importance of a proper support infrastructure and show the major achievements of EGEE in this area.

In June 2008 major release of the GGUS portal will take place. Included in this release will be several new features, like special direct routing of tickets for urgent cases that will trigger alarms at the impacted sites. New categories like protected ticket and service tickets will also be implemented. We want to present to the audience the new as well as the established features.

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