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The EGEE user support infrastructure

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Describe the scientific/technical community and the scientific/technical activity using (planning to use) the EGEE infrastructure. A high-level description is needed (neither a detailed specialist report nor a list of references).

User support in a grid environment is a challenging task due to the distributed nature of the grid. The variety of users and VOs adds further to the challenge. One can find support requests by grid beginners, users with specific applications, site administrators, or 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 has shown that the goal has been achieved with success.

Report on the experience (or the proposed activity). It would be very important to mention key services which are essential for the success of your activity on the EGEE infrastructure.

GGUS provides a single entry point for reporting problems. In collaboration with the EGEE EIS team, the EGEE UIG, and NA3, GGUS offers a portal where users can find documentation, and powerful search engines to find answers to resolved problems and examples. Wiki pages are compiled for frequent or undocumented problems/features arising from tickets. GGUS is interfaced with other grids'support infrastructures such as in the case of OSG. Also, GGUS is used for daily operations to monitor the grid and keep it healthy. Finally, GGUS is used also to follow and track down problems during stress testing activities such as the HEP experiments production data challenges and the service challenges.

The daily operations are being dealt with in the framework of the Executive Support Committee (ESC). The ESC is a body that has representatives from all of the ROCs of EGEE. This organisation meets monthly to discuss the development of the support system and to decide on actions and priorities.

With a forward look to future evolution, discuss the issues you have encountered (or that you expect) in using the EGEE infrastructure. Wherever possible, point out the experience limitations (both in terms of existing services or missing functionality)

The current model foresees only basic interfaces to the existing VO user support infrastructures. A move towards a further integration of the existing structures is needed for a better overall user support. The plan is hence to understand in detail how VOs provide support to their users so that GGUS can better suit their needs. The scalability of GGUS is constrained by the availability of supporters. This will rapidly become a constraint to growth unless more dedicated supporters are found.

Describe the added value of the Grid for the scientific/technical activity you (plan to) do on the Grid. This should include the scale of the activity and of the potential user community and the relevance for other scientific or business applications

The grid user support model in EGEE can be captioned "regional support with central

coordination". Users can submit a support request to the central GGUS service, or to their Regional Operations' Centre (ROC) or to their Virtual Organisation helpdesks. Within GGUS there are appropriate support groups for all support requests. The ROCs and VOs and the other project wide groups such as middleware groups (JRA), network groups (NA), service groups (SA) and other grid infrastructures (OSG, NorduGrid, etc.) are connected via a central integration platform provided by GGUS.

GGUS central helpdesk also acts as a portal for all users who do not know where to send their requests. They can enter them directly into the GGUS system via a web form or e-mail.

This central helpdesk keeps track of all service requests and assigns them to the appropriate support groups. In this way, formal communication between all support groups is possible.

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