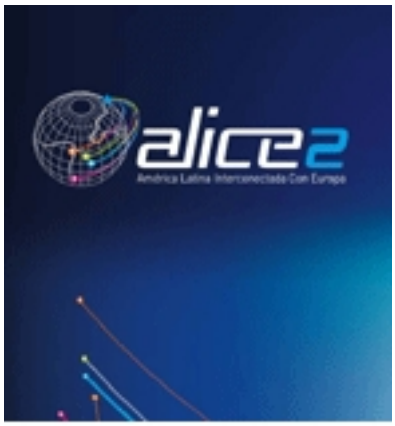
Written by María José López Pourailly
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CLARA

Within the framework of the @LIS 2 programme, the European Commission (EC) signed an €18-million contract on 30.11.2008 with the not-for-profit international organisation CLARA for the ALICE2 project. ALICE2 will consolidate and extend the RedCLARA network in Latin America, thus improving connectivity between Latin American and European Researchers. The e-infrastructure for collaborative research and education will provide a first class platform to support Latin American development and the project will work towards disseminating the potential of its use for applications that impact the Region, thus helping to reach the goals agreed by Governments in the UN MDG Plan.

The ALICE project (América Latina Interconectada Con Europa – Latin America Interconnected with Europe), which ran from June 2003 to March 2008 and was co-funded by the European Commission's @LIS programme, established CLARA, the Latin American research networking association, and built a research and education network infrastructure in Latin America –the RedCLARA network. This network interconnects 13 countries in the region and provides them with connectivity to GÉANT2, the high-bandwidth, pan-European research network. Built on this success, the EC has approved funding for the ALICE2 project, which will run until August 2012 with the goal of reaching and connecting more Latin American countries and broadening the possibilities for collaborative research and regional development.
Basile T. Papadopoulos, Head of Unit EuropeAid/B/2, commented the reason for supporting ALICE2: "The success of the ALICE Project which was able to create a Latin American Research and Education Network (RedCLARA) linking together 12 Latin American Countries among themselves and to the pan-European Network GÈANT2 has been one of the major achievements of the EU-LAC Cooperation in Information Society. The construction of the physical telecommunications network has been implemented successfully but, more importantly perhaps, the Latin Americans stakeholders of this ambitious endeavour have been able to create an independent working organisation which manages and operates the network and promotes collaboration between the LA countries, each with its national organisation of networks for research. These achievements and the dynamism of this relatively young organisation, has convinced us to support the ALICE2 Project, aiming at expanding the network and its benefits to all the countries in the regionand, to promote collaborative research intra LA and with EU, contributing thus to the consolidation of RedCLARA's self sustainability".

The specific objective of the first ALICE project to create an infrastructure (although of a virtual nature) on which the "brains" of Europe and Latin America could interconnect was achieved and the @LIS Final Evaluation assessed the project very highly. The first phase of ALICE was managed by DANTE, but for ALICE2 the regional research networking association CLARA will take the reigns from DANTE and coordinate the project, a pioneering innovative strategy not yet repeated in any other world region.
"We are very pleased that the impetus gained during the ALICE project has enabled CLARA to take full responsibility for the Latin American research and education network from DANTE", said Dai Davies, General Manager of DANTE. "Whilst we will continue to be a partner in the ALICE2 project and will provide management and technical support, CLARA will drive the future development, expansion and sustainability of the RedCLARA network and the growth of the user community in Latin America."
In order to carry forward the success story of Latin America's advanced research network infrastructure, which since 2004 has been enabling Latin American and European researchers to exchange large amounts of data in the fields of scientific and social development, CLARA will need to build on the foundation laid by ALICE. The objective of ALICE2 is to stimulate and support collaborative research within Latin America and with Europe by strengthening the Latin American organization CLARA and the enabling network infrastructure RedCLARA, while fostering the creation and maintenance of research communities working in development-related (Millennium Development Goals, MDG) as well as FP7 related-issues.
"ALICE2 will permit CLARA to create a state-of-the-art RedCLARA network by deploying an Optical Network Infrastructure that will provide first class support to networked research and education, thus facilitating the creation across Latin America of virtual research laboratories and educational facilities. The project will also target researchers, educators, and technicians, by empowering them through training and community-building so that they can jointly create solutions to some of the more pressing regional problems while improving collaboration with Europe and the rest of the world", explains Florencio Utreras, Executive Director of CLARA.

The creation of user communities will be another focus of ALICE2, ensuring the proper utilisation of RedCLARA in applications related to the Millennium Development Goals as well as fostering collaboration with European researchers on the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) priorities. It will also empower the National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) and their user communities to become active players in the research and education networking community by providing training and tools for their technical, management and academic communities. Based on an up-graded hybrid network of IP, dark fibre and wavelengths, an important aim of the project will be to establish long-term stability and sustainability for Latin American regional research and education networking. Many examples of successful on-going projects in the fields of health, physics, astronomy, climate change and environment, information and communication technologies, and education are proving that the connection to the regional research and education network infrastructure, and to the rest of the research world via other networks, is a key factor for the development of Latin American nations.

Costa Rica is one of the Latin American countries that will connect to the RedCLARA network in the framework of the ALICE2 project. Alejandro Cruz, General Director of CeNAT (the Costa Rican National Centre of High Technology – the institution that is leading the process of integration of the country to the project), explains the importance of this new endeavour: "The

Costa Rican academic and scientific community has been developing important initiatives in research, post-graduate studies and training in the most diverse technological and scientific fields at a national level. At the same time it is also participating in thematic networks at an international level. The connection to the RedCLARA network is a challenge and an opportunity to enhance our collaboration and exchange knowledge in the different scopes of action with academic and research communities in Latin America and the rest of the world".

ALICE2 is coordinated by CLARA and partnered by the NRENs of 14 Latin American countries, all @LIS 2 beneficiaries, and of 4 European countries. ALICE2 is also partnered by DANTE, a not-for-profit organisation, co-funded by the EC and working in partnership with NRENs to plan, build and operate advanced networks for research and education.

Project Partners ar:

- CLARA, Coordinating Partner, AL: http://www.redclara.net
- DANTE, UK: http://www.dante.net
- INNOVA|RED, Argentina: http://www.innova-red.net
- RNP, Brazil: http://www.rnp.br
- REUNA, Chile: http://www.reuna.cl
- RENATA, Colombia: http://www.renata.edu.co/
- CONARE, Costa Rica
- Cedia, Ecuador: http://www.cedia.org.ec/
- RAICES, El Salvador: http://www.raices.org.sv
- RAGIE, Guatemala: http://www.ragie.org.gt
- CUDI, Mexico: http://www.cudi.edu.mx
- RedCyT, Panama
- RAAP, Peru: http://www.raap.org.pe
- RAU2, Uruguay: http://www.rau.edu.uy/redavanzada/
- Centro Nacional de Innovación Tecnológica (CENIT) - Red Académica de Centros de Investigación y Universidades Nacionales / REACCIUN, Venezuela: http://www.cenit.gob.ve
- RENATER, France: http://www.renater.fr
- GARR, Italy: http://www.garr.it
- FCCN, Portugal: http://www.fccn.pt
- RedIRIS, Spain: http://www.rediris.es

About @LIS2:

Building on Alliance for the Information Society - @LIS achievements, the European Union will support, through the second phase of the Alliance for the Information Society programme - @LIS2, the continuation of dialogue and cooperation on policy and regulatory frameworks in the Information Society area, boost interconnectivity and collaborative research in Latin America and with the EU and promote the Latin American ongoing regulatory integration effort. @LIS2 will support the regional political dialogue process - eLAC, strengthen collaborative research intra-LA and with the EU, increasing access to the RedCLARA network and promote

on-going regulatory integration efforts. Particular attention will be given to the social impact of information and communication technologies. @LIS2 activities cover the period 2009-2013.

About CLARA:

CLARA -Cooperación Latino Americana de Redes Avanzadas- is a not-for-profit international organisation which came into legal existence under Uruguayan law on 23 December 2004. The CLARA vision is to serve as a Latin American collaboration system by means of advanced telecommunications networks for research, innovation and education. CLARA develops and operates RedCLARA, the advanced network that was established in Latin America –for regional interconnection– and linked to GÉANT2 (the high-speed pan-European research and education network) via the ALICE Project, which –until March 2008– was co-funded by the European Commission through the @LIS Programme. CLARA is constituted by 17 Latin American countries and its Assembly, on which each country is represented, meets every six months to define courses of action and policies to be implemented. For more information, visit www.redclara.net

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About DANTE:

DANTE is a non-profit organisation, coordinator of large-scale projects co-funded by the European Commission, and works in partnership with European National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) to plan, build and operate advanced networks for research and education. Established in 1993, DANTE has been fundamental to the success of pan-European research and education networking. DANTE has built and operates GÉANT2, which provides the data communications infrastructure essential to the success of many research projects in Europe. DANTE is involved in worldwide initiatives to interconnect countries in the other regions to one another and to GÉANT2. DANTE currently manages projects focussed on the Mediterranean and Asia-Pacific regions through the EUMEDCONNECT2 and TEIN3 projects respectively, and is a partner of the ALICE2 project for Latin America. For more information, visit www.dante.net .