Consultation - Federation 2.0 Report

This consultation will be open from **Tuesday 5th October 2021 at 17:00 CEST to Monday 1st November at 17:00 CEST**

Background

R&E federations are key enablers of academic endeavors by facilitating user access to protected online resources, within and across organisations, locally and around the world. They have evolved from seeds planted by select universities to encompass the full range of educational institutions, research institutions, their commercial and governmental partners, and research and scholarly collaborations. The distinctive access needs of the Academy to support trusted collaboration have resulted in a unique combination of technical and policy implementations. We name this singular, global infrastructure, an integration of all of the national R&E federations, Academic Interfederation.

The Federation 2.0 Working Group, following a scenario planning methodology, explored the future of 10 or more years hence. We were concerned about what we saw: variations of dystopia across the Academy. We realised that the community of national Research & Education (R&E) federations is not prepared to navigate the critical uncertainties that will determine their future.

This report sets out a range of recommendations on actions that need to be taken to ensure the future of Academic Interfederation.

Overview

Participants are invited to:

- consider the proposed report
- propose appropriate changes / challenges to the proposed text, and
- reflect on whether the recommendations in the report are valid and correct.

This consultation will be open from **Tuesday 5th October 2021 at 17:00 CEST to Monday 1st November at 17:00 CEST**

The document for the consultation is available as a pdf attachment. All comments should be made on: consultations@lists.refeds.org or added to the changelog below. Comments posted to other lists will not be included in the consultation review.

Change Log

comment #	Line /Reference #	Proposed Change or Query	Proposer / Affiliation	Action / Decision (please leave blank)
1	general	I think it is strange that a report on Academic Interfederation does not mentioned eduGAIN at all. This seems a significant oversight.	Nicole Harris, GÉANT	We added a section describing the current landscape, including eduGAIN.
2	616	The report makes a recommendation that new governance structure for federation be put in place but does not analyse or discuss why the group feels the current models are ineffective. To make this point, i feel this analysis is needed. There are many groups looking at federation - REFEDS, eduGAIN, FIM4R, FIM4L, AEGIS etc. The report does not mention them.	Nicole Harris, GÉANT	We mentioned many of these in the new description of the the current landscape. We hope the sections "Illustrating the Challenge" and "What's Missing" demonstrate the need for a new governance structure that is not met by the listed parties.
3	627	"Academic Interfederation exists, but is not coordinated nor resourced as a viable and evolving infrastructure" - this statement implies that the eduGAIN infrastructure is neither resourced nor viable. This needs addressing.	Nicole Harris, GÉANT	Academic Interfederation is not the same as eduGAIN and there are interfederations other than eduGAIN. We hope we have made clear that eduGAIN serves the community well, but does not have the scope of governance proposed.
4	1036 and 665	These comments on the volunteer nature of the community seem to contradict each other. I'd also challenge the participation in REFEDS by many individuals as strictly "volunteer" as most people are participating on paid time from their organisations	Nicole Harris, GÉANT	Volunteerism is both at individual and organizational levels, and we want to continue the bottom up nature of much of the work. While many volunteer individuals are doing so on some organization's time, do those organizations commit to provide the time when the specific indivudal withdraws? To sustain some of the program of work, including efforts where the whole of academic interfederation is represented, the commitment from the organizations needs to be sustained, reliable and aligned.
5	208	The use of "federal" and also the examples provided might lead to believe this is a US based thing, which is of cause totally not the case. Perhaps showcasing examples from around the globe would strengthen the notion this is a global effort.	Niels van Dijk, SURF	We have made some wording changes, the current landscape in the report emphasises its global nature, and an additional non-US example was added to the Examples from the Field section.

6	General	• The report does not describe or discuss the existing federation arrangements (e.g., eduGAIN) and assets (e.g., Shibboleth) that have global significance. You need to know where you are, before you can decide when and how you intend to get to your destination. • A specific, egregious omission is the absence of the role of NRENs. Almost all federations are funded, organised, and governed through an NREN. The same is true of virtually all international activities relating to academic federation: who funds eduGAIN and Shibboleth? The NRENs are the decision-makers, and therefore all change will be directed through their governance mechanisms. • Where there should have been reflective discussion on the tangible, actual facts and realities of federation, there is, instead, unsubstantiated speculation about "future-looking scenarios". • The "key takeaways" and "recommendations", therefore, appear non-sequiturs, having little apparent logical association with the preceding scenarios. This is not to say that they are poor takeaways or recommendations, necessarily; but that they are not clearly supported by the prior analysis. • The recommendations themselves are uncontentious; they often describe activities that the community is already engaged in, to a greater or lesser extent. It might be helpful if the report discussed how existing activities could be refocused, realigned, etc., to achieve the intended vision or end-state. • However, the report does not articulate a vision or end-state. It is unclear what purpose, therefore, what the recommendations are intended to accomplish, in a strategic sense, for the stakeholders and beneficiaries of federation. An unsympathetic reader might read it as a justification of "more of the same", rather than a directed statement of ambition.	Josh Howlett, Federated Solutions	We have added a section describing the current landscape, including eduGAIN. Technological assets are not in focus because the long term future is independent of technological specifics. We have been more specific about the role of NRENs by including the Global CEO Forum (which includes the CEOs of all NRENs) as an organization that should be involved in the first step by commiting leadership and resources. The scenario planning methodology does start with gathering of input from various stakeholders, which in turn is used to identify several "criticial uncertainties". This establishes the basis of the facts and realities of the federation. You may wish to review Appendix B orhttps://wiki.refeds.org/display/GROUPS/Survey+and+Interviews which documents the backgrounds and the experience of the survey and interviewees. These in turn are used to structure scenario construction. Once the scenarios are established, the next step is to reflect on what they reveal about our ability to navigate to any of the futures they depict. The fundamental link between the scenarios and the recommendations is how unprepared the community is to address the scenarios in an effective way. Other sectors are stepping up, taking ownership of the identity landscape. An incremental approach that continues to constrain our focus on R&E alone will not suffice to address this. The vision or end-state is now articulated repeatedly, starting in the Executive Summary.
7	341	The figure refers to the bottom-right quadrant as "Multiply or Divide" but the text beginning on line 341 uses "Multiple and Divide".	Andrew Morgan, Oregon State University	Fixed, thanks.
8	445	I think this line is a cut-and-paste error. It says, "I Will Survive: A story of directed action under abundant resources", but I think it should be "I Will Survive: A story of autonomous action under limited resources" (or some variation). This is the heading of the Autonomous, Limited scenario.	Andrew Morgan, Oregon State University	Fixed, thanks.
9	general	The report does not address specifically the main current interfederation effort, eduGAIN, so the many "calls to action" generically directed to the Academic Intefederation does not have a clear reference and it is difficult to understand who should take action. This is a competing world. It is difficult to imagine that a strong Academic Interfederation leadership will be enough to fight the risk to be marginalized by the BigTech initiatives. The Academic Interfederation must compete on user experience, meeting expectations and technology standards. The Academic Interfederation is invited to "present a single face to the world", but the Academic Interfederation does not exit in a vacuum. It is part of that world that it should interact with. Moreover the "single face" paradigm is not acknowledging the important regional differences of the members of the Academic Interfederation community. A single face or a single voice must be based on the synthesis of the many voices on which the community of reference is composed.	Davide Vaghetti, GARR	We agree! Yet even though Academic Interfederation contains regional differences, a single voice for it in its entirety is essential to our future, we believe. Our current approach is not big enough to face off against Big Tech or Finance/Banking, for example, nor does it suffice to set expectations of federation functionality that can be relied upon globally. Further, a coordinated governance for Academic Interfederation is not in contradiction to such differences, it can take them into account. Challenging for sure, but not impossible.
10	546	In the "Participation and inclusion are the cornerstone of Academic Interfederation" key takeaway, we can read that "success depends on implementing common requirements across each R&E federation", but this is a "slow and unreliable process". Then the proposed solution "To expand participation and make global collaboration more inclusive" is a non sequitur, as it deals with creating new national federations or inclusivity of federated access, but none is said about the main subject which was presented as "implementing common requirements".	Davide Vaghetti, GARR	We have revised our Key Takeaways to make clear the value of broad inclusion and the separate value of streamlining participation to address the apparent dissonance.

11	606 - 612	Line 608 and 609 both suggest that new /young (er) staff should be hired and trained to take over the role of the more experienced staff. Later, 611-612, it says "*...reduce the number of new people within the Academic Interfederation community needed to get the job* done.". I asume you don't want to sack the people you just hired and trained, so I would suggest to replace "new people" in line 611 for something like *'more/extra/something similar'*.	Casper Dreef, GÉANT	Fixed, thanks.
12	627-630	A questionable statement keeping in mind eduGAIN exists and is resourched.	Casper Dreef, GÉANT	Yes we agree that eduGAIN does provide support for the shared metadata to enable Academic Interfederation, but our recommendations for a viable and evolving infrastructure goes far beyond eduGAIN's current remit.
13	932-937	What is the relevance of this section?	Casper Dreef, GÉANT	We have updated the document to make this more clear. If we can work alongside other efforts -- from consumer to government and industry -- to solve the same problems, we can benefit from shared resources. If we don't, the competing solutions will offer at best a redundancy and at worst a challenge to develop cross domain integrations.