

Information & communications

CSIR awards national research network tender to Telkom

The CSIR has awarded the contract for the installation of the national backbone network of the South African National Research Network (SANReN) to Telkom. SANReN forms a crucial part of the national cyberinfrastructure initiative funded by the Department of Science and Technology (DST). This development concludes the process of negotiations for the installation of the national backbone, which was undertaken on behalf of the DST by the CSIR's Meraka Institute.

The CSIR's Meraka Institute is responsible for the implementation of the DST's cyberinfrastructure initiative which, in addition to SANReN, comprises the Centre for High Performance Computing (CHPC) and the Very Large Data Base data storage initiative.



SANReN and the Centre for High Performance Computing are part of the DST's national cyberinfrastructure initiative

The national backbone will interconnect Pretoria, Johannesburg, Bloemfontein, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, East London and Durban on a 10 Gbps (Gigabits per second) optic fibre ring network. This network will enable the research community to engage in meaningful online collaboration. It will also be used to link to international bandwidth acquired for research purposes.

Negotiations have been underway with potential providers for the national backbone since the start of the SANReN project in 2007. Recent progress in the liberalisation of the South African telecommunications sector contributed to positive action by key players, resulting in the competitive tender process that has just been concluded. The most important factors considered during bid evaluation were the ability to deliver a next-generation network of the type required for research and education, the acceptability of the price offer and the national telecommunications footprint.

Commenting on this milestone, centre manager of the Meraka Institute, Kagiso Chikane states, "The national backbone will give institutions access to facilities such as the [CHPC](#) in Cape Town, enable the establishment of a national computing grid, and allow for large volumes of data transfer among institutions - typically a requirement of the research community. Of immediate relevance is the importance of the national backbone in supporting South Africa's Square Kilometre Array bid to host the world's most powerful radio telescope."

Godfrey Ntoele, Telkom's Group Executive for National Sales and Marketing Operations, adds: "We are pleased to count the CSIR as one of our most valued customers alongside the likes of Absa, the IEC and Fifa. That such a diverse array of customers has chosen to work with us attests to our network's ubiquity and resilience as well as our management capabilities and expertise."

Adds Ntoele: "It also highlights our growing reputation as a trusted adviser, tailoring solutions based on the specific needs of individual customers. This is complemented by our capacity to deliver Next Generation Network solutions based on leading-edge technologies and support functions rendered from our National Network Operations Centre in Centurion."

Future plans for SANReN are the completion of metro networks in Pretoria, Cape Town and Durban. The national network will interconnect with the metro networks and enable all research institutions to have access to SANReN.

- Biffy van Rooyen