

NGI/EIRO understanding and preference about the ERIC model

17th May 2011

1 Executive Summary

During last three months (March, April, May) a simple questionnaire was sent to each member of the EGI Council. These results have been collated by the EGI.eu Policy Development Team and a brief analysis of the results provided in this document by analysis of the responses and the responses weighted by the respondent's Council votes. There were 18 responses to all the questions equating to a total of 656 from a total of 1203 Council votes. Where participants provided multiple responses their comments have been included verbatim, but the numerical analysis has weighted their responses where there were differences. This report is based on random sampling and the views and analysis expressed in this report are those of the authors (EGI.eu Policy Development Team) and do not necessarily reflect the official EGI.eu position on the subject.

Overall there seems to be a significant interest in exploring a common e-Infrastructure ERIC (that brings together Grid, HPC, Networking and Data) proposal for submission in 2013 that provides a framework for the lightweight coordination of the infrastructure (as opposed to having an equipment purchasing role) that will increase the recognition and acceptance at the national governmental level of e-Infrastructure and provide a route towards increased financial stability and sustainability, even if not all of the current participants in EGI.eu would initially be part of an e-Infrastructure ERIC.

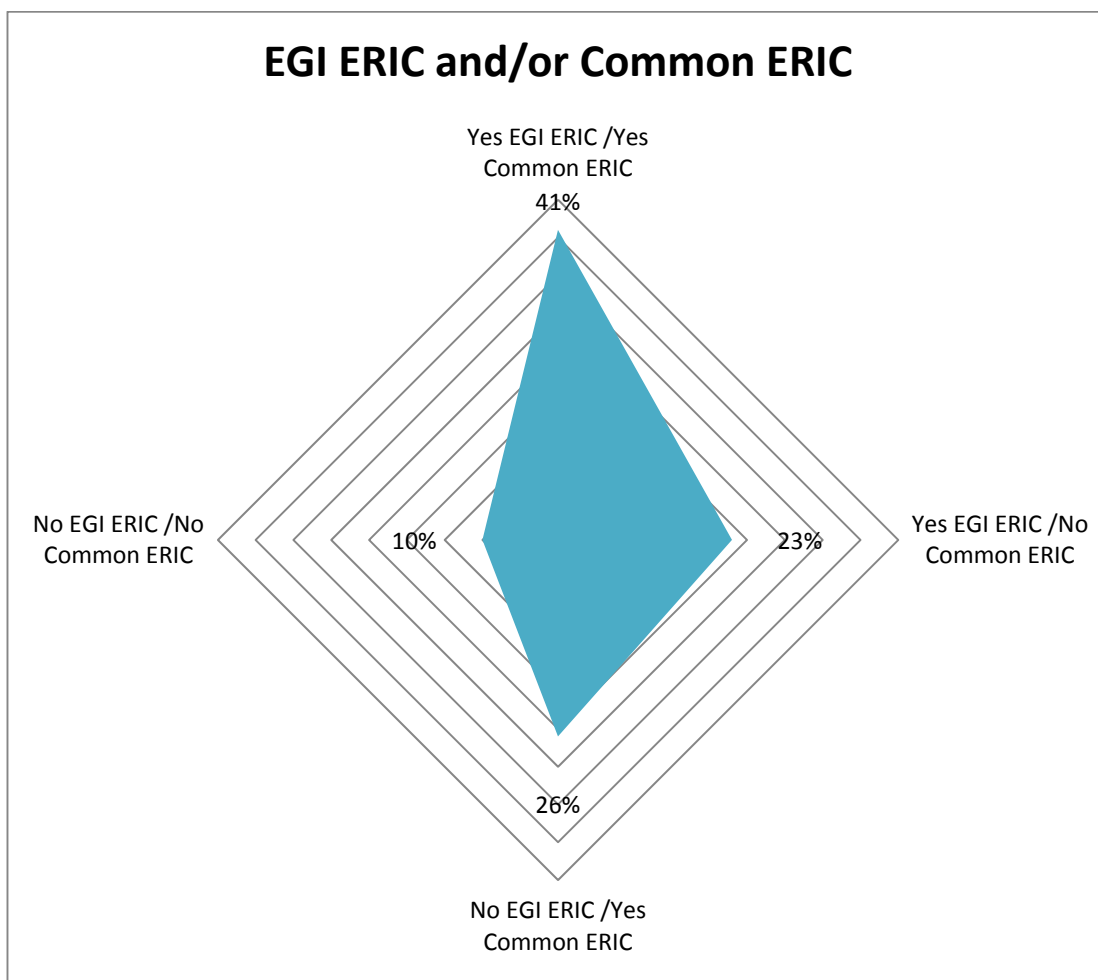
In building support for this strategy within the e-Infrastructure community there are a number of follow on activities that could be considered.

1. Confirming that the conclusions drawn from this survey have the broad support of the EGI Council.
2. Having a dedicated meeting with other e-Infrastructures providers to understand their interest in such an approach.
3. Engagement with the EC in resolving some of the questions raised in the document "Alignment of EGI.eu with the ERIC Organisational Model" (<https://documents.egi.eu/document/244>)
4. Developing an outline of a bidding proposal (with any other interested e-Infrastructure providers) so that a more concrete discussion can take place on the ERIC formation.

2 Analysis

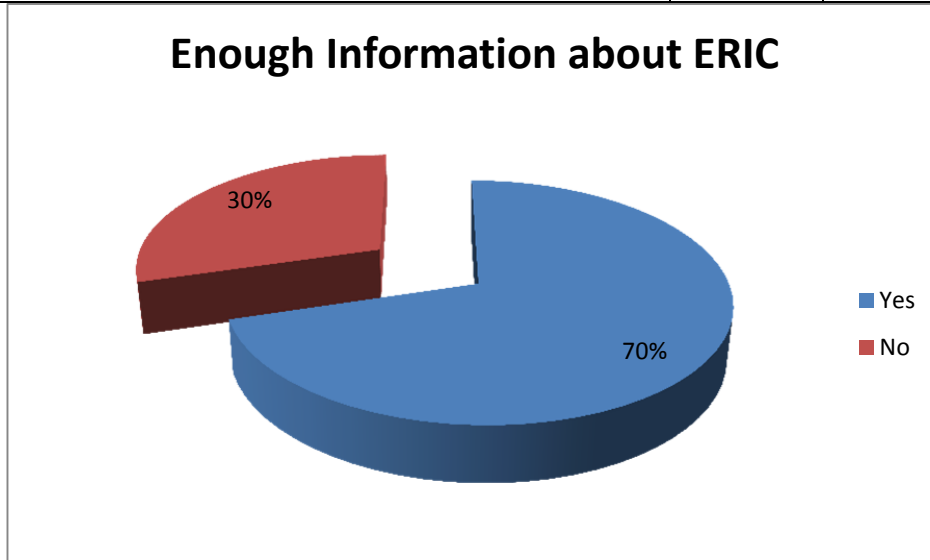
The survey responses and any comments are provided in section 3. The answers to question 2 (forming an EGI ERIC) and to question 7 (forming a common e-Infrastructure ERIC) were correlated to show:

How many NGIs/EIROs are in favour of an EGI ERIC, common e-Infrastructure ERIC or both?	Responses	Percentage by count	Percentage by votes	Total by Votes (1203)
Yes EGI ERIC /Yes Common ERIC	7	39%	41%	270
Yes EGI ERIC /No Common ERIC	4	22%	23%	148
No EGI ERIC /Yes Common ERIC	3	17%	26%	170
No EGI ERIC /No Common ERIC	4	22%	10%	68
Total	18	100%	100%	656



3 Raw Questionnaire Results

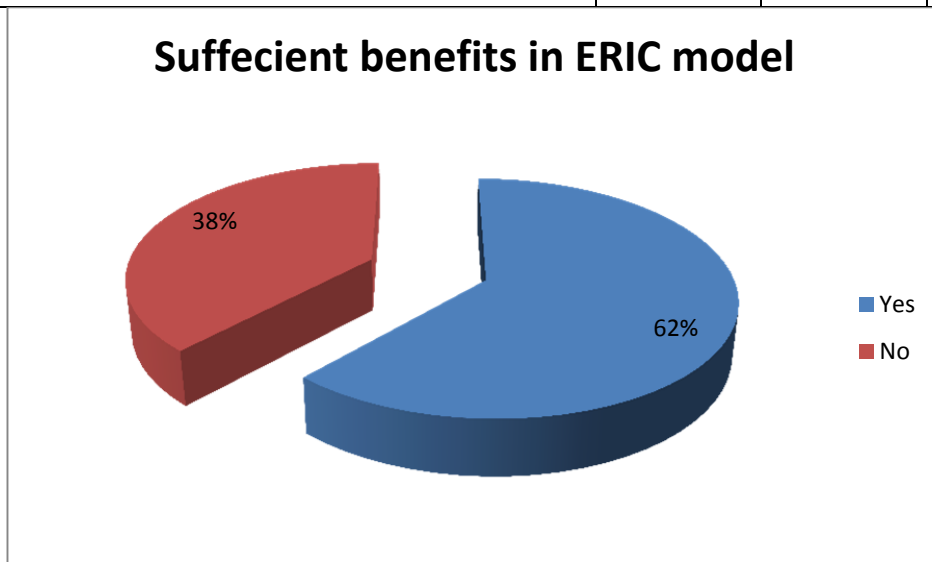
1. Do you feel to have enough information about the ERIC and implications of its creation? If No - what more information do you need?	Responses	Percentage by count	Percentage by votes	Total by Votes (1203)
Yes	16	73%	70%	532
No	6	27%	30%	224
Total	22	100%	100%	756



Comments:

- The existing EGI ERIC doc does not clearly show what are the pros and cons vs the existing structure. Section 5 tries to do that but does not provide a clear table. I would have hoped to see a table showing the costs of running as ERIC vs now, as well as a table showing other EU organizations that have converted to ERIC. In the FAQ section I would have expected a question such as "What are the benefits of an ERIC?"
- Hard to say. The document "ALIGNMENT OF EGI.EU WITH THE ERIC ORGANISATIONAL MODEL" also contains many questions. There are obviously many issues that need be sorted out by the NGIs themselves (wrt national legislation). E.g., is ERIC an accepted legal form (or sufficiently supported by the authorities), or when will it be?
- Financial implications are not clear. Is the long term financial binding between the NGI and ERIC or the government and ERIC. What is meant by the "could make some of the states reluctant in participating to the EGI as ERIC and burdening themselves with new financial obligations." on page 20. What are the additional financial obligations?
- Making the transition into an ERIC is a purely legal/financial consideration and should be taken on these grounds. For EGI.eu: I think we need more quantitative measures of what the financial benefits are. For NGIs: It is not clear to me in how many countries this could help improving the position of NGIs. In short: the cost/benefit ratio should be quantified before a decision is taken.
- I might miss some documents next to the initial "ERIC" document that elaborates on the implications. But I can probably only blame myself for not doing the necessary lookup.
- We have an excellent understanding as we been producing an e-IRGSP deliverable for legal issues in research infrastructures for the last three years.
- I really don't know what might come down the track, as I'm not sufficiently informed of the implications for my country

2. Do you see sufficient benefits in the ERIC model so that your NGIs interested in EGI reaching the ERIC status?	Responses	Percentage by count	Percentage by votes	Total by Votes (1203)
Yes	11	58%	62%	418
No	8	42%	38%	258
Total	19	100%	100%	676

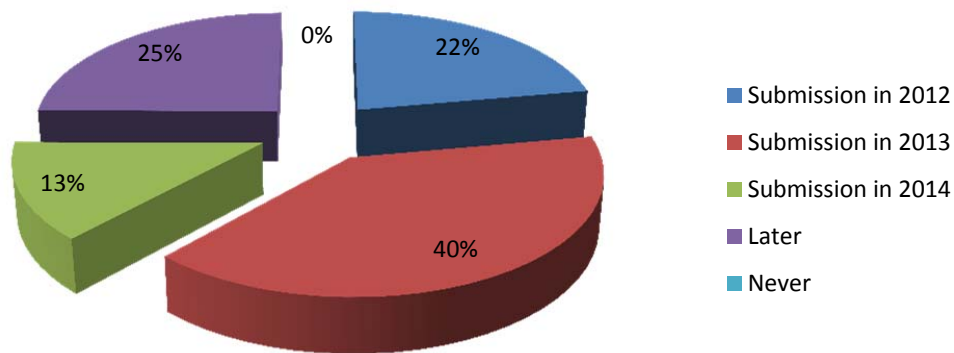


Comments:

- In particular, the visibility nationally of EGI will increase.
- There is nothing wrong with the current legal entity. Besides: we have more important matters to solve.
- Comment to question 3: I consider this the earliest ****POSSIBLE**** submission date if answering question #1 leads to a decision to make the transition to ERIC.
- Political recognition aspect is the major issue that must be resolved now or in near future to ensure EGI consortium sustainability
- The real benefit from ERIC model would come by having joint e-Infrastructure ERIC as referred in question 7. Only for EGI benefits are more questionable.
- I personally do see because of a greater commitment that will be necessary from the own country
- "Sufficient benefits" would mean either that the current status of EGI.eu is somehow unsatisfactory, or that there are clear financial gains from it (e.g., tax exemption, so that membership fees would drop).
- We understand this would allow NGIs to seek regional funding. However we do think there are some issues: - we don't see how e-infrastructures will be able to compete for regional funds unless they can show an impact on the general public and currently the only affect a narrow slice of the research community - An ERIC gives significant control to the EC. We don't see why EGI should give such control unless there is a significant level of funding guaranteed from the EC.
- Clearly, moving to an ERIC has a cost but it will give visibility to EGI at ministry levels and set EGI in the European landscape in a long term.

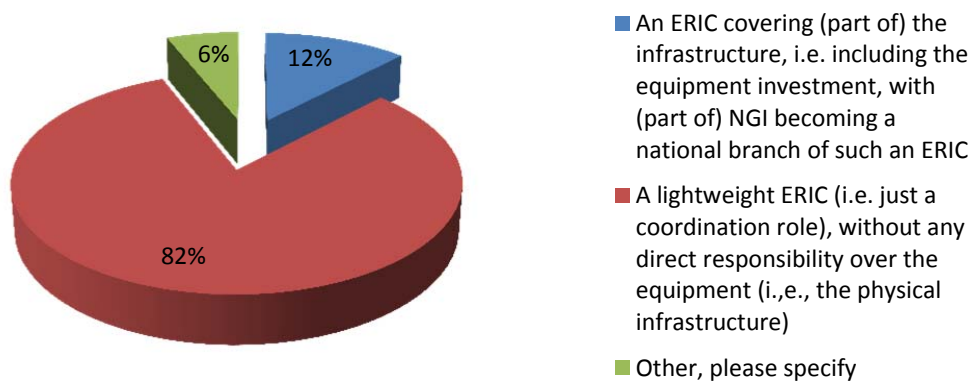
3. In what timescale do you feel it right to prepare an ERIC application for EGI?	Responses	Percentage by count	Percentage by votes	Total by Votes (1203)
Submission in 2012	3	16%	22%	150
Submission in 2013	8	42%	40%	268
Submission in 2014	2	10%	13%	90
Later	6	32%	25%	168
Never	0	0%	0%	0
Total	19	100%	100%	676

Timescale for ERIC application



4. What scope would you envision for EGI ERIC?	Responses	Percentage by count	Percentage by votes	Total by Votes (1203)
An ERIC covering (part of) the infrastructure, i.e. including the equipment investment, with (part of) NGI becoming a national branch of such an ERIC	3	16%	12%	80
A lightweight ERIC (i.e. just a coordination role), without any direct responsibility over the equipment (i.e., the physical infrastructure)	15	79%	82%	556
Other, please specify	1	5%	6%	40
Total	19	100%	100%	676

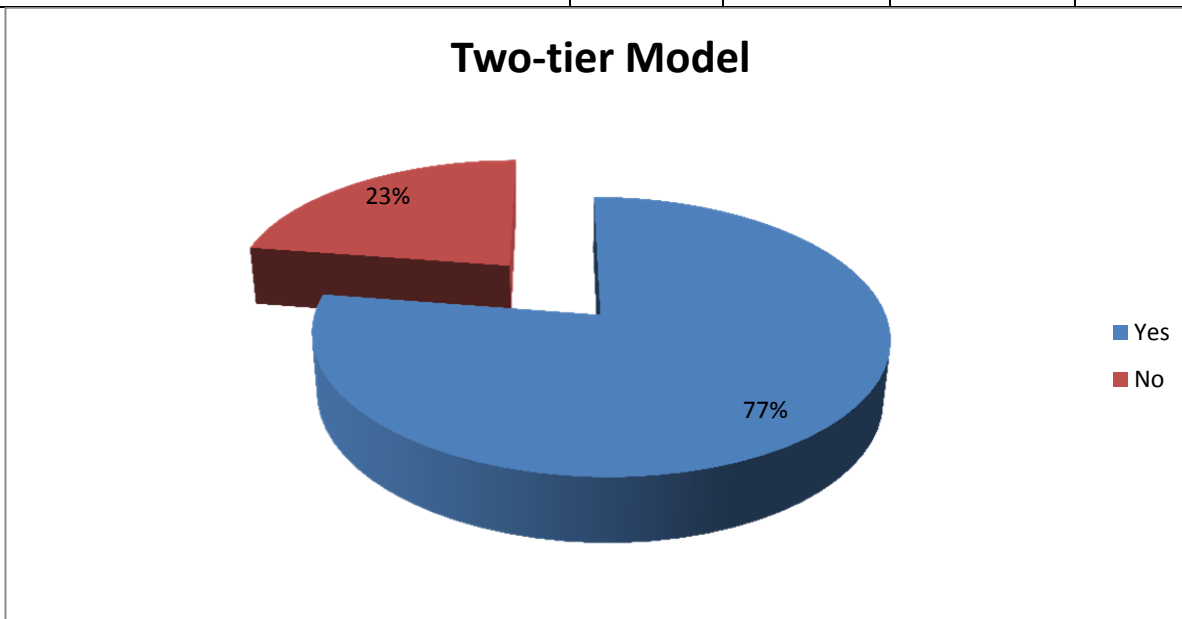
Scope for the EGI ERIC



Comments:

- Hard to say now, needs more investigation

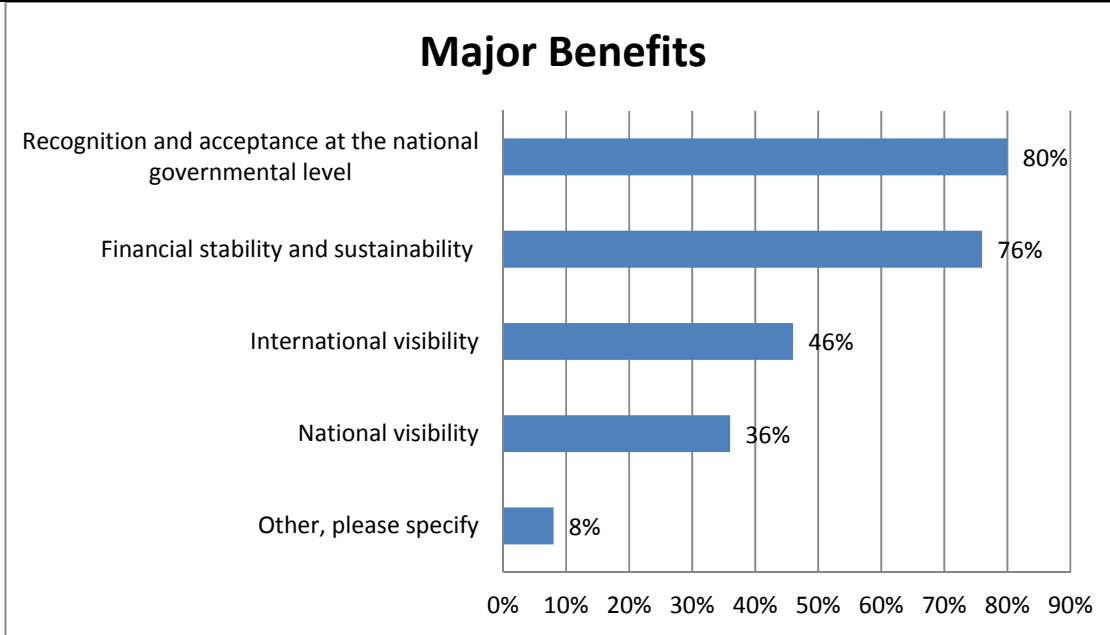
5. Probably not all NGI and EIRO members will be willing/able to join a Grid ERIC due to some national issues or restrictions. Is it acceptable for you (your NGI) to start with only a subset of EG Council members being ERIC partners? With other partners joining as associated members. This implies e.g. a two-tier model (like PRACE hosting and associated partners model).	Responses	Percentage by count	Percentage by votes	Total by Votes (1203)
Yes	13	72%	77%	508
No	5	28%	23%	148
Total	18	100%	100%	656



Comments:

- The timeline for acceptance of the EGI ERIC will vary a lot per country. So a transition where countries have flexibility to move towards the ERIC NGI is needed. It may cause problems when in the transition an NGI temporarily becomes (or must become) associated member (with reduced/no voting rights).
- It is acceptable but not desirable.
- I have to put here that I do not think that Belgium will ever join an ERIC for the grid. Recurrent funding in the given circumstances will not be obtained.
- The PRACE model is not really apt here, as there is a very big difference between the resources put down by the hosting and the associated partners. Two-tier systems bring a host of governance problems. Look at the current discussions regarding "EURO-only summits" vs. "EU summits".
- It will take time or countries to join

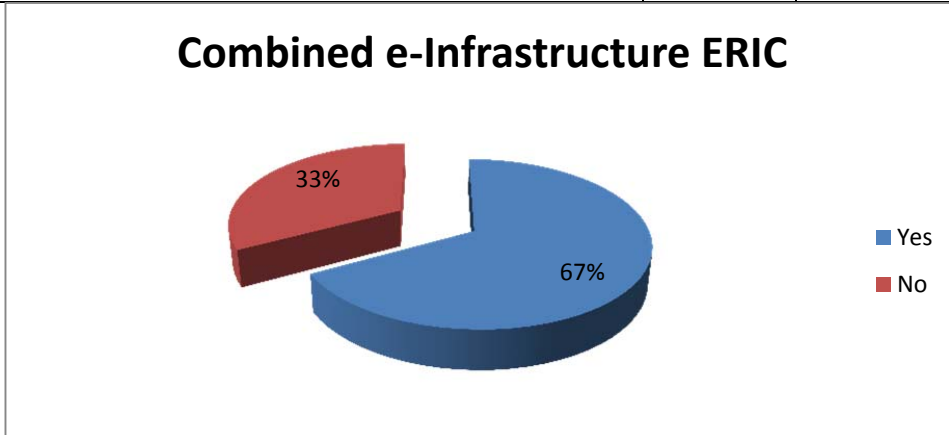
6. What do you see as major benefits for implementing the ERIC model for grid resources? Tick all that apply.	Responses	Percentage by count	Percentage by votes	Total by Votes (1203)
Financial stability and sustainability	14	74%	76%	498
International visibility	9	53%	45%	312
National visibility	8	47%	34%	242
Recognition and acceptance at the national governmental level	15	83%	80%	526
Other, please specify	1	6%	8%	50



Comments:

- Current information does not allow to answer this question

7. Would a combined e-Infrastructure ERIC (i.e. a single application potentially in conjunction with PRACE, NRENs, an EU data providers) improve the case nationally for an ERIC?	Responses	Percentage by count	Percentage by votes	Total by Votes (1203)
Yes	10	56%	67%	440
No	8	44%	33%	216
Total	18	100%	100%	656



Comments:

- Definitely yes. It will be advantageous to show to the national funding bodies that there is a clear vision and collaboration on European e-Infrastructure that includes high-end computing, distributed computing, data, etc.
- In theory this would be interesting, but in practice I am afraid it will only add complexity. Individual communities have different maturity level. On the other hand, it may be possible to gradually extend the ERIC with, e.g., the more explicit data repositories part.
- In fact, I wouldn't advise EGI.eu to go through the ERIC-trouble on its own.
- Not enough information available at this moment.
- Probably depends entirely on the national situation. It could also lead to an unfortunate two-tier situation or some countries leaving EGI.eu.
- The discussion would be overwhelmingly complicated
- For small states like Moldova combined e-Infrastructure approach is rather natural - it is logical to joint NGI, HPC initiative & NREN under umbrella of one eInfra association. But in other countries that already have independent entities preferences can vary...
- This would not only "improve case nationally" but to our understanding would be the way to proceed. Having different ERICs for example for PRACE and EGI will eventually hurt us all.
- This "No" is due to the political structure of Belgium. The NREN is federally organised and is very successful, the grid has been attached to this NREN but computing has been take up by the regions. So it would be extremely difficult to put all these together.
- It would be hideously difficult to design and implement such a scheme.
- We don't believe EGI has sufficient critical mass to make an ERIC on its own. - The boundaries between networking/grids/supercomputing are blurring - It would provide a way of reducing the admin & bureaucracy (do we really need DANTE, EGI.eu and PRACE Ltd each with their own admin, finance, mgmt. etc.) - It would not link the ERIC to any particular technology or service organisation (other than national federations)
- There is a clear willingness from the French ministry to develop synergies between grids and HPC.