SIG-CISS #17 Oslo 16.03.2026

Event page: https://events.geant.org/event/2006/

Wiki page: https://wiki.geant.org/spaces/CISS/pages/1191772456/17th+SIG-CISS+meeting

Agenda:

14:00 - 15:45 Session 1

- Introduction (& history)
- Setting the scene
- Round the table discussion:
    - What are you working upon today ?
    - What do you think it's relevant for the SIG ?
    - What do you think the SIG should help coordinate ?

Coffee break

16:15 - 18:00 Session 2

- What are interesting topics?
- Where are these topics discussed?
- And what could be the role of the SIG-CISS?

Notes:

Welcome and introductions

After a welcome and short introduction by Mark van de Sanden (GÉANT), Maciej Brzezniak (PSNC), member of the Steering Committee, gave a historic background of SIG-CISS, including the Terena Storage-TF from which the SIG-CISS originates.

Maciej learned a lot from the group on how to implement national initiatives on data management including File Sync & Share Service. There is an opportunity to coordinate or push for a shared national storage solution, which would align with the GÉANT Storage Federation.

Maciej heard from the Italians in Bologna about the Edu Storage initiative and would like to continue to discuss things like that, which helps and contributes to learning from other people's experience .

This raised a **question: Should the focus on storage or should we go beyond storage to include computing and workflows?**

Computing is considered mostly by National HPC providers, but there is a gap between HPC and computing and storage services for the average user. The HPC and other specialised storage and data management solutions are typically not approachable by the regular users and accessing them requires facing a steep learning curve. At the same time end-users, in particular the long-tail users are familiar with cloud solutions that win with the user friendliness and integration level. This gap between what is provided to science users and what is needed by wide public should be addressed.

During the talk and discussion the topic of sovereignty came up, but, while seen as important, it was seen as a separate topic.

Round table

After a history background a round table of introduction was held to learn the people in the room, and online, and the topics they are working on.

- Hagen Echzell (UiO): from the University of Oslo works with Nextcloud and Matrix Protocols and is interested in OCM, Open Cloud Mesh. He is there to listen and learn about the group.
- Mateus Oliveira (RNP): from Brazil is interested in data and AI, especially serving data in AI. He wants to learn more about the group's discussion on AI.
- Sigrid Gåseidnes (Sikt): works with Jan Meijer (Sikt) on international collaboration and is new to the NREN world. She has a background in biotechnology and bioinformatics and is there to learn.
- Bo Bai from (DeiC): hopes DeiC will transition into being a full stack NREN and sees storage as a key solution for researchers' infrastructure needs.
- Kalle Happonen (CSC): finds the group useful for collaboration and technical discussions. Suggestion to move beyond exchanging ideas to standardizing practices for common solutions, for example: standardizing object storage.
- Olaf Verschoor (GÉANT): is there to learn and understand the requirements of the community. Understands the difficulty of the money flow between NRENs and procuring between them, wants to understand these dynamics and find solutions to facilitate these processes. There's an increasing demand for European sovereignty. He wants to understand how to facilitate this, potentially by working on tailored terms with suppliers or strengthening relations with organizations like Nextcloud. GÉANT can be seen as an extended department of an NREN. Understanding is needed on what are the blockages and facilitate processes, questioning why coalitions exist outside of GÉANT.
- Ingo Ebel (DESY): DESY has an on-prem first strategy, but lacks an open-source strategy and is interested in object storage and initiatives like Open Cloud Mesh.
- Trond H Amundson (UiO - University of Oslo): At the UiO we made a strategic decision to build our own infrastructure. The university decided to become a cloud provider to retain competence and control. Running own services helps maintain knowledge that is lost when using external cloud structures.
- Anders Bruvik (UiO): Anders is an advisor and doesn't do much technical work currently. The university has a large IT department (400 people) and provides infrastructure to other universities. The goal is to foster cooperation with other institutions.
- Mario Reale (GÉANT, previous SIG-CISS coordinator): The buy vs. build discussion has been ongoing for years within the SIG. The goal was to avoid a "religious war" and focus on using the cloud, including hybrid use cases. Mario highlights the SIG's privileged position in bringing experts together to share experiences. Getting experts across Europe and worldwide to discuss specific topics is beneficial. It's important to discuss abstractions, such as x86 instruction sets, OpenStack, and Kubernetes. Agreeing on abstractions and standards is critical.

During the roundtable already **discussions on different topics spawned** within the room:

- **Standardization**: requires output and effort, including time and funding. Sharing practical approaches to building components, like storage systems, seems realistic given the possible time dedication and overall load of the people can be beneficial; this includes blueprint architectures for infrastructure/service elements, pricing levels, and operational/CAPEX/TCO costs. Focus as far has been mostly on hardware, software, and processes. Exchange knowledge on processes and topics like backups and running S3 seems promising, including replicated S3 for DR. *To which level of infrastructure layers we want to discuss within the SIG is an open question.*
- **Role of GÉANT vs NRENs** in the SIG-CISS context: GÉANT could be proactive in future in the areas of leading cloud and data mgmt initiatives. Some NRENs are full-stack providers, while others focus on network and trust identity, with research computing supported by other organizations. There's a challenge in supporting coalitions of the willing due to the varying maturity levels of NRENs. *Nevertheless we (as community, SIG-CISS and Geant) should now miss the opportunity to gather, support, hold and maintain the critical mass of the willing parties.*

- **Build or Buy:** During the round table the topic on "build or buy" decisions regarding services and infrastructure, came up. Overall, the strategies vary per country and based on how it relates to existing European cloud frameworks. *It would be ideal if everyone switched to European providers, but the market may not drive development in areas like data release and control for research*. The suggestion was made that **collaboration is needed in areas where the market won't provide solution**s.
    - The UiO made the decision to become a cloud provider to retain competence and control. Running own services also helped to maintain knowledge that is lost when using external cloud structures. Questions arise on why to invest money in building vs. buying services from commercial providers.
    - Deutsche Telecom Cloud found it hard to make money from research infrastructures because researchers fully utilize hardware *(no overbooking bonus).*
    - The SIG-CISS community seems more build-oriented, considering long-term planning, ecosystem building, and cost control. Building maintains knowledge and allows for learning. Building becomes more prominent when aiming for a full-stack organization and scaling services. Storage is diverse, and the decision to build or buy depends on the type of storage.
    - Some institutions historically bought large-scale infrastructure for HPC and then used it (shared, retrofitted, migrated) for cloud and storage. Experience in building and operating infrastructure long-term is valuable, especially for data systems. Institutions with this experience are better positioned to assess costs and risks.
- The extent of buying hardware vs. services depends on incentives like projects, funding, and institutional mission.
    - Data services are more riskier, requiring knowledgeable people on technical and process levels. Public clouds offer functionality and integration but may not be cost-effective for storing large datasets.
    - PSNC offers on-premise services for researchers who want cost control and are not satisfied with public cloud allowances. It's not fair to compare things which you buy because PSNC still buys lots of services like video conferencing, chat applications, even if we, if you run certain of them, some of them ourselves, because of the compatibility reasons, because of the different requirements which cannot be addressed internally.
    - Overall, builders will never keep pace with cloud providers when it comes to functionality, integration of services like you've got in the public cloud.
    - It is agreed that not every approach should be a build, but the decision-making process should involve the right expertise. The people making build or buy decisions may not have the right information.

SIG-CISS coordination and organisation

After the coffee break the second session of the SIG-CISS started with a short introduction to set the scene.

SIG-CISS started with the first meeting in 2017, with the ToR originating from 2018 and is 8 years old. The topic of setting the scene was the changing world, introduction of the European Data Strategy and related acts, the introduction of the EOSC Federation, EuroHPC and AI Factories, changing geopolitics and the focus on European Sovereignty.

During the first and second part of the meeting different focus areas for the SIG-CISS were mentioned.

- **Sharing experiences:** Sharing experiences in designing, offering, and running services can help others to make informed choices. The SIG is seen as a place where organizations can decide between build and buying and figure out how to do it efficiently. Standardization and focusing on essential tasks are crucial in the current age.
- **Build:** The focus depends on the people attending the SIG-CISS. Most people have a focus on building instead of buying. The focus could be on compute, OpenStack, storage, or data sharing with researchers. *It emphasizes the importance of the community where members can collectively refine ideas and focus on essential aspects.*

- **Long term view:** It is suggested to define a goal for the SIG, envisioning what it wants to achieve in five years. In the past, the goal was more generic, defined around knowledge sharing on specific topics, so soft type of activities. Deciding on something requires support, justification, and advocacy within the community.
- **Tangible outputs:** The aim is to not just be a *"club of self adherents and talking heads"* but to have credible results with people who are "doers more than talkers".
    - Sharing knowledge in a soft form allows members to learn from others and reassure themselves or realize they are doing things wrong. The value of the group lies in this informal knowledge exchange, which is hard to measure with KPIs.
    - Formalism should be balanced to avoid discouraging participation. Tangible outputs are needed to solve problems and ensure synchronization with project developments. Formalizing discussions into written documents and best practices is valuable.
    - The SIG-CISS is not a decision-making body, but it can propose to the CTOs.
- **More frequent meetings:** The group meets a few times a year to exchange operational knowledge and best practices. People present the good and the bad things, including the failure stories. The SIG-CISS currently meets twice a year physically, which may not be sufficient to advance on certain topics. It is discussed to have more frequent online meetings (quarterly or monthly) to progress more on certain topics.
- **Subgroups*:*** The SIG-CISS could be a platform for topical discussions. Subgroups can be organised for specific topics with regular work, meetings and clear output definitions, for example on architecture, standardization, or deployment. During the regular SIG-CISS meetings the subgroups can provide updates per topic. Subgroups need volunteers to coordinate and bring people together to move forward on certain topics. This cannot be done just by the Steering Committee. It would be good to see what topics can be discussed more concretely.
- *Reports from projects and other initiatives*: The SIG-CISS can be a platform to synchronize on activities, for example it could have reports on efforts within projects (like incubators). This would help to build an overall picture. Reporting doesn't need to be formal, just updates on progress, issues, and next steps. What could be the critical added value is the non-formal coordination among people, groups (usual suspects typically) who work on various initiatives with common goals and shared values such as contribution to data sovereignity etc.
- *Collaborations with other SIGs*: During the discussions the potential collaboration with other SIGs because of overlapping topics and/or co-locating the SIG-CISS with another SIG came across. In the discussions on “Build or Buy” the SIG-Procurement was mentioned, in discussion the conditions under which infrastructure is procured. Also the SIG-AI could be of interest. *As an offline reflection (after the meeting): possibly also liaison to TF-MSP as this group holds more decision makers (CEOs, CTOs) and awareness of the topics covered by SIG-CISS should be improved.*

In the week after the SIG-CISS meeting the GEANT Community Program (GCP) workshop is held, at which all SIGs are represented. Guido and Mark will represent the SIG-CISS. To prepare for the GCP workshop a SWOT analysis needs to be prepared. The discussion during this SIG-CISS meeting will be used as input.

One of the aims of this SIG-CISS meeting was to collect opinions about the SIG-CISS itself, whether to and how to evolve the SIG-CISS in the future and whether the charter[1] of the SIG-CISS needs to be updated. ACTION: the Steering Committee will have an initial discussion updating the charter and then bring it to the community for open discussion. Also the topics and how to organize subgroups and processes will be discussed within the steering committee.

After some detailed discussions on many broad topics the SIG-CISS meeting was closed. Anders and colleagues from the University of Oslo were thanked for their hospitality and for managing the local logistics.

[1] https://wiki.geant.org/download/attachments/121344123/SIG-CISS-Charter.pdf