

For Immediate Release:

Counting the cost of research computing infrastructures

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A major survey to understand the cost of European academic computing services was launched today. It is run by the e-FISCAL project, which is funded by the European Commission to estimate the cost of 'e-Infrastructure' computing services like High Throughput and High Performance computing. These costs must be understood so that e-Infrastructures can show their value to the European research community and the benefits they bring over competing technologies.

"The e-FISCAL project is contributing to a more accurate understanding of the costs of computing services," said Dr. Per Öster, chair of the European Grid Infrastructure Council. "With this information we can make more accurate plans for the growth, development and sustainability of these infrastructures."

The past decade has seen significant investments in High Performance Computing (HPC) and High Throughput or Grid Computing (HTC) by the European Commission and member states. These form a major part of the 'e-Infrastructure,' which supports European research in science, technology and the humanities. However, their costs are not easy to understand, as they are funded by a mixture of European, National, regional and subject-based funding.

The emergence of new commercial technologies like Cloud computing, which can tackle similar problems to HTC, makes it important for Europe to clearly understand the costs of the e-Infrastructures it has built. The survey by e-FISCAL is an important step in this process, providing cost estimates and comparing them to the closest commercial leased and on-demand services, such as those offered by Amazon.

There are many methods for studying service costs, such as Total Cost of Ownership, but none are entirely appropriate for e-FISCAL's study. Instead, e-FISCAL brought together several models to find a method that was detailed enough to give good results, but simple enough to make collecting the data easy for participants. The method provides an estimated Annual Cost of Ownership of e-Infrastructure for 2010 and 2011.

This survey builds on a survey conducted by a previous European Commission funded project, e-IRGSP2, as part of research into legal and governance issues around e-Infrastructures.

The survey can be found at <http://www.efiscal.eu/survey> either on-line or as an editable pdf document.



Notes to editors:

For more information about the e-FISCAL project see www.efiscal.eu or contact Owen Appleton (owen@emergence-tech.com +44 (0) 7590465387). For questions related to the survey, contact survey@efiscal.eu.

The financial study carried out by the e-IRGSP2 project is online at http://e-irg.eu/images/stories/publ/e-irgsp2_public_deliverables/e-irgsp2_d4_2b_approved_by_the_consortium.pdf though the project has concluded. For the subsequent e-IRGSP3 project see <http://www.e-irg.eu/about-e-irg/e-irgsp3.html> .

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