

France Grilles Operations: Assessment of the setup phase

Initial organization and objectives

Working groups have been set-up to work on topics identified as key for operations based on the experience from the previous EGEE projects. One-year mandates have been written by the people in charge of these topics at the time in order to have a French NGI operated safely, and being well-managed. This was in line with the hierarchical model described in the workshop of last May 31st 2010 and presented on figure 1.

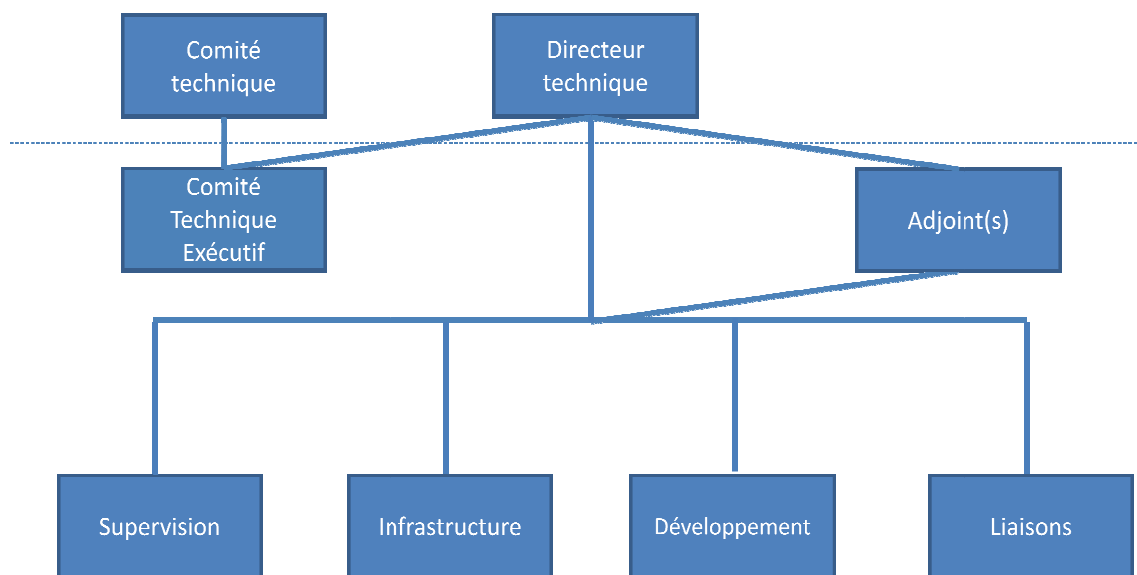


Fig 1: Organization chart presented on May 2010

First objective has been to transition from the French ROC to the French NGI, and set-up the dedicated mandatory regional tools.

Second objective has been to stabilize the transition, and especially:

- Help site administrators to overcome the change in monitoring tools at the end of EGEE by providing them with all needed information.
- Identify key people in all functions described in figure 1, and validate working groups within these functions. Most of them were already *de facto* in place apart from the new function “Liaisons”, meant to be an interface between France Grilles, users and middleware.

Third objective has been to assess the model used so far, and especially:

- the pertinence of proposed organization
- Its efficiency to achieve the goals defined in the mandates of our working groups.
- Its abilities to define and follow priorities and roadmaps with regards to:
 - The evolution of our regionalization needs and the development status of corresponding tools at EGI level (e.g. regionalized repositories, operation tools...)
 - the establishment of central services at the NGI level
 - metrics and measurement

Achievements and work in progress

Our first objective (transition from ROC to NGI) was met in July 2010. The French NGI has set-up the dedicated resources needed to face the EGI obligations, both in terms of Operation Center and leader of global tasks (Operations Portal and SA3 task). As examples, France Grilles has set-up an NGI Nagios server for national monitoring, and a central repository for national accounting.

Our second objective (stabilization of the transition) was met in October 2010. Knowledge has been disseminated to sites administrators through a training workshop. Project operations procedures have been disseminated.

An operations workshop has been held in October, during which key people in working groups have been identified. Parallel sessions within this workshop have been useful to determine the scope of:

- Interface between Operations and Users. This has turned into a working group whose mission was the identification of topics to be tackled by specialists from a specific community as well as site experts.
- Interface between Operations and Middleware. This has turned into the inventory of the tools and procedures for operations.

The workshop turned out to validate the fact that working groups are de facto needed and focused on relevant and very much needed topics.

We have not fully met our third objective (assessment) yet. Lessons learnt from the workshop led us to an analysis of tasks, as well as of global organization. This, together with an analysis of the mandate of a Technical Committee and Technical Executive Committee, is still in progress.

Matching the important missions of France-Grilles with the existing expertise available will derive from this reflection.

Together with the proposal for a modified operations model that puts infrastructures as its base, the handling of central services at NGI level is also under way through the definition of an NGI catalogue and central services, within the scope of a resource allocation model.

As a consequence of the above, MoU between the sites hosting central services and the NGI is under way. Also, we aim at a set of comprehensive dedicated tools are still to be set-up to build a “NGI dashboard”.

Situation overview as of early 2011 – strengths and weaknesses

The situation of success in transition from EGEE/EGI has clearly been possible through the implication of the partners in EGI and the historical community of site administrators. Thanks to that, France Grilles has a large user community and a lot of expertise available. Most infrastructures are already in place as a legacy from the EGEE projects. The working groups structure has allowed for the emancipation of the French NGI.

However, now that the set-up phase is over and we have a clearer view of what remains to be done, it appears that:

- tasks for the set-up phase have to be separated from the follow-up phase;
- The hierarchy of tasks and responsibilities is not clear.

We have highlighted that working groups are needed, however their original mandates are too wide: they group together strategic decisions, definition of policies, set-up and follow-up. Part of the outcome of October’s operations workshop is that the separation of responsibilities between the technical direction and the working groups is unclear: The technical direction needs to reorganize the

tasks and get formally into a decision process definition including a technical committee and a technical executive committee to validate guidelines for 2011.

In addition, existing working groups are felt too numerous and staffed too little, hence suffering of a lack of efficiency (this mainly due to people leaving France-Grilles, institutes disappearance or internal mission change in France). Also, the notion of functions described in figure 1 is not reflected in reality.

This is clearly driving us to a reorganization of tasks within the NGI, with a need for:

- less granularity but clearer responsibilities;
- more visible decision processes.

Last but not least, we need to establish an organization chart for France Grilles that reflects daily reality.