

Introduction

The RIPE Network Co-ordination Centre performs activities for the benefit of the Internet service providers (ISPs) in Europe and the surrounding areas; primarily activities that the ISPs need to organise as a group, although they may be competing with each other in other areas. The RIPE NCC must therefore observe strict neutrality and impartiality with respect to individual service providers. In particular, it refrains from activities that are clearly in the domain of the ISPs themselves.

Activities are defined, performed, discussed and evaluated in an open manner. Results of activities such as software tools are made available to the public. Budgets as well as actual income and expenditure are published. Individual data will be kept in confidence when required. For example, the amounts of address space allocated and assigned are published, as are data base entries of individual assignments including the relevant contact data; however the information supporting individual assignment requests is kept in strict confidence.

While an activity may result in services being provided to an individual ISP, performing the activity as a whole must benefit the European ISPs as a group. For example, address space registration services are provided to ISPs individually, but the activity as such benefits all ISPs by distributing address space according to common standards as well as maintaining a neutral and accessible registry.

Key activities provided by the RIPE NCC for its Contributors include

- Maintenance of the RIPE Network Management Database
- The role of Regional Internet Registry
- Domain Name System (DNS) co-ordination
- Maintenance of the RIPE document store

The growth of the European Internet industry has a direct bearing on the operations and future of the RIPE NCC and as such is carefully monitored. An indicator of this growth is the number of individual European Internet hosts registered in the SNS. The RIPE NCC records these data and publishes the count on a monthly basis. The recorded counts for 1995 and 1996 are shown on the graph below.

As can be seen, the growth for 1996 matches that of 1995 and can still be considered rapid. It does suggest however, that the exponential function seen from 1992 until 1995 has now abated to a linear rate of growth. The accuracy of this information is however slightly questionable, due to the increasing number of hidden hosts such as those using generic top level domains such as .com or those hidden behind fire walls.

Another indicator of the growth of the industry is the number of local internet Registries (local IRs) in Europe and the surrounding areas; RIPE NCC's contributors. This information per quarter for 1995 and 1996 is given in the second graph on Page 27.

The growth in the number of local IRs, which the RIPE NCC closely monitors, has reduced from being exponential to being lineal. The rate of growth is still rapid as reflected by the approximate doubling of the number of registries in 1996. The increase in the number of local IRs does have a direct proportional effect on the RIPE NCC workload and the RIPE NCC's growth closely matches it.

RIPE NCC Organisational Structure

The rapid growth within the Internet industry has led to the RIPE NCC having a far bigger workload, and having to deal with a distinctly larger

number of Contributors. In order to accommodate this changing environment and to place the RIPE NCC in a position from which to respond to future changes, the organisational structure of the RIPE NCC was adjusted during the course of 1996. The new structure is slightly more hierarchical and is better suited to meet the prevailing demands and growth patterns of the RIPE NCC. The total number of employees has also markedly increased from 12 at the end of 1995 to 18 at the end of 1996.

The new management structure was established in the third quarter of 1996 and the vacant positions filled. It is seen that 1997 will be a period of slow structural growth and consolidation.

RIPE NCC Activities

The activities carried out by the RIPE NCC during 1996 were in accordance with document ripe-133. The activities were classified to be either Registration Services activities, Other activities, New activities or Administration and Reporting activities.

The Registration Services activity is probably the most visible of those four and is carried out by the hostmasters. The aim of this activity is the allocation of Internet layer address space to European users. The 600 local IRs (the RIPE NCC Contributors) which are mostly Internet Service Providers and some large enterprises, assign address space locally to end users. The RIPE NCC in turn allocates address space to the local registries, supports them and ensures that address space assignment occurs in a fair and regular manner. Where needed, the RIPE NCC is also involved in end user address space requests.

The Other activities and New activities are primarily conducted by the engineering staff in addition to technically supporting all other organisational activities. Other activities mainly concern the RIPE database but also include any other projects that the RIPE NCC Contributors wish to be addressed. New activities are proposed in the Activity Plan preceding the current year and are agreed to by the Contributors.

Administration and Reporting activities are conducted by the administrative staff and aim to ensure the smooth running of the RIPE NCC, and to inform external and internal parties of relevant events and developments.

Activity highlights for 1996 and items of interest are:

- After a period of staff shortages, the Registration Services department was able to
- A new ticketing system to track and record registration requests was introduced
- Version 2.0 of the RIPE Database was developed and implemented with a great deal of
- The RIPE NCC website underwent a major upgrade and is now regularly maintained and c
- The hierarchical authorisation mechanism for the numbers in the database and domain
- A greater number of local IR training courses were held; they spanned many European
- Liaison activities with external bodies such as IANA, InterNIC and AP-NIC were incre
- After a costing/charging analysis, the RIPE NCC charging system underwent a change:

Outlook for 1997

The year 1997 is forecast to be another very busy year in the life of the RIPE NCC, as can be seen from the approved RIPE NCC Activities and Expenditure 1997, document ripe-144.

Although never certain, predicted activities in 1997 are as follows:

- As always, the growth and development of the RIPE NCC is to a large part dependant upon the growth and development of the Internet industry as a whole. This growth is thought to continue to be rapid during 1997. The RIPE NCC will however closely monitor this and match its own expansion to mirror the increasing workload.
- It has been agreed by the TERENA Executive Committee and the RIPE NCC Contributors that the feasibility of the RIPE NCC becoming a separate legal

entity should be investigated. The target date for this transition is 1 January 1998. The form of this new legal structure and the exact procedures for accomplishing it are yet to be decided. This is now being investigated by a small committee.

- As a precursor to the RIPE NCC becoming a legal entity in its own right, its financial administration will be done separately to that of the other TERENA activities throughout 1997. This will be implemented within the existing TERENA framework. The purpose is to enable the RIPE NCC to build up experience in this matter while still having support from the TERENA Secretariat. It will also avoid the need for a single major change at the moment when the RIPE NCC becomes a separate legal entity.

- Due to staff growth and the regrettable conclusion that extra office space needed could not be adequately offered at the RIPE NCC's present location, the RIPE NCC staff will have to move in 1997. A new building with room for growth has already been found in Amsterdam and the forecast moving date is the end of April 1997.